FOLK MEDICINE IN MODERN EGYPT

BEING THE RELEVANT PARTS OF THE *ṬIBB AL-RUKKA* OR *OLD WIVES' MEDICINE* OF 'ABD AL-RAḤMĀN ISMĀ'ĪL

BY

JOHN WALKER, M.A.

Assistant Keeper, British Museum

τοὺς δὲ βεβήλους καὶ γραώδεις μύθους παραιτοῦ
" Refuse profane and old wives' fables "
(1 Timothy iv. 7)

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[Title Page]

LONDON
LUZAC & CO.
46 GREAT RUSSELL STREET, W.C. 1
1934

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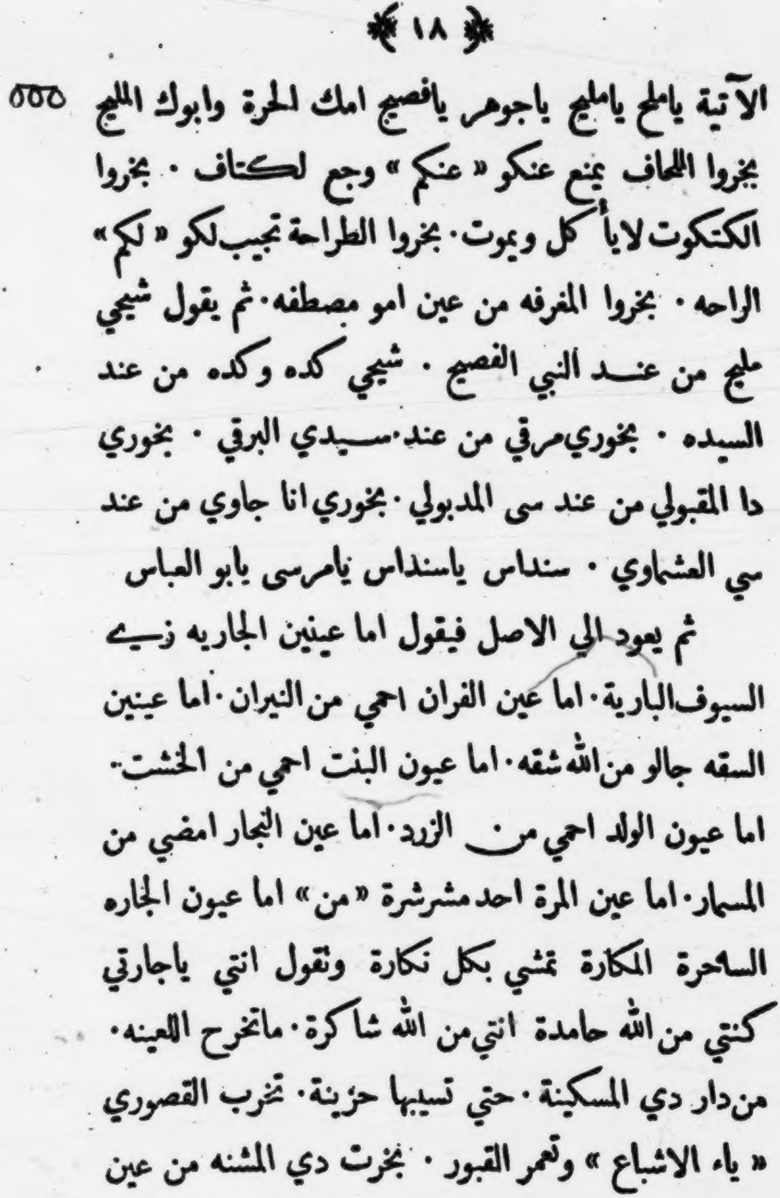

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اما عيون الولد احمي من الزرد · اما عين النجار امضي من
المسمار · اما عين المرة احد مشرشرة « من » اما عيون الجاره
السحرة المكارة تمشي بكل نكارة وتقول انتي ياجارتي
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من دار دي المسكينة · حتي تسيبها حزينة · تخرب القصوري
« ياء الاشباع » وتعمر القبور · نجرت دي المشنه من عين

Specimen page (II, 18) of the Arabic Text of *Ṭibb al-Rukka*

Frontispiece]

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TRANSLATOR'S PREFACE

Some months before his death, in May, 1928, my master 114
and friend the Rev. T. H. Weir, D.D., Lecturer in Arabic at the University of Glasgow, suggested to me that I might translate the following little Arabic treatise on some superstitious practices in modern Egypt. He very graciously allowed me to have access to certain of his own rough translation notes, but unfortunately I was unable to finish my rendering in time to profit by his valuable criticism and advice. I can here but inadequately express my deep sense of gratitude for his inspiring teaching, his great erudition, and, more than all, his memorable friendship.

The treatise of which this is an English rendering, appeared in Arabic in two small volumes of 158 pages in all, printed at Cairo in 1892–4 (A.H. 1310–12). The author was an Egyptian doctor, 'Abd al-Raḥmān Efendī Ismā'īl, and his book is entitled *Ṭibb al-Rukka*, i.e., The Medicine of the Old Women. For an etymological note on the meaning and origin of the word *rukka* reference may be made to page 18 of the text. A third volume was promised but, so far as can be discovered, was never issued.[1] I understand that the late Professor E. G. Browne, of Cambridge, contemplated translating the present volumes. Certainly he refers to the work in his Fitzpatrick Lectures on *Arabian Medicine*, 1921, page 65. The Arabic text is also referred to by Professor D. B. Macdonald in his article on magic (*siḥr*) in the *Encyclopedia of Islam*, in which he states that it "contains much curious information on popular superstitions, especially medical; the author is a graduate of the Ḳaṣr al-'Ainī medical school and writes with the indignation of the qualified medical practitioner."[2]

In spite of the author's obvious lack of sympathy with the 113
popular medical "prescriptions," he had ample opportunity of 114
gaining first hand knowledge of the customs and practices of

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[1] The author did publish in the following year, with the approval of the Egyptian Ministry of Education, a work called *Al-Taḳwīmāt al-Ṣiḥḥīya*, but it is merely a straightforward, elementary treatise on hygiene.

[2] Prof. Macdonald vocalizes the title in his transliteration as *Ṭibb al-Rikka* (see below, p. 18).

113 his fellow countrymen. No book since the days of Lane's
114 epoch-making work on the *Manners of the Modern Egyptians* (first published in 1836) has appeared to add, to any appreciable extent, to our knowledge of the folklore and magic of the dwellers of the Nile Valley. One recent book by Miss Blackman, *The Fellāḥīn of Upper Egypt* (London, 1928) does attempt to survey the ground, but it is only a tentative, albeit a praiseworthy, effort. Her photographic illustrations are especially interesting. But a great deal still remains to be done, and it is to be hoped that Miss Blackman and others working in the same field of research, may receive the assistance from the public
[123] that they merit. There are some secret rites, such as those of the *Zār* (see pages 64-7), which can be properly investigated only by a woman.

113 Similar superstitious practices observed in neighbouring Moslem lands, it may be noted in passing, may be usefully
[101] derived from Dr. T. Canaan's *Aberglaube und Volksmedizin im Lande der Bibel* (Hamburg, 1914) and from E. Doutté's *Magie et Religion dans l'Afrique du Nord* (Algiers, 1909), as well as from Westermarck's *Ritual and Belief in Morocco* (London, 1926). Mention must also be made of Herklots' *Islam in India* (new ed. by W. Crooke, Oxford, 1921), which is a mine of folk customs. As for the instruments employed by North African village surgeons, an illuminating study of these will be found in Hilton Simpson's *Arab Surgery and Medicine* (London, 1922). Folk-medicine among the Moroccan womenfolk is also recorded by A. R. de Lens in his *Pratiques des harems marocains* (Paris, 1925). M. Rouyer's *Notice sur les médicamens usuels des Égyptiens* in the *Description de l'Égypte* (2nd ed.), xi, (1822), pp. 429–460, does not deal with the superstitious medical practices of the people; while Dr. Chafey Bey's lecture to the Institut Égyptien, entitled *De la médecine des empiriques en Égypte* (*Bulletin* No. 4, pp. 25, 44–46, 505–512) is but a cursory introduction to the subject. Much of the folk-medicine of Moslems can be extracted from the numerous Arabic books on magic, and particularly from such a treatise as the traditional medicine of the prophet Muḥammad, the so-called *Al-Ṭibb al-Nabawī*, of which a French translation, *La médecine du Prophète*, was published by Perron at Algiers in

1860. There is also *Al-Damīrī's Ḥayāt al-Ḥayawān* (trans. by 113
Jayakar, and published by Luzac & Co., London, 1906–8), an entertaining zoological lexicon which has embedded in it many curious instances of Moslem folk-medicine.

To confine our attention to Egypt, however, without doubt 114
a great deal could be done by a cultured Egyptian student of 121
folk-customs to collect these age-old, but fast dying, practices. A stranger can seldom hope to obtain, unless after many years' residence among, and constant intercourse with, the natives, that insight into their mentality which is necessary for such a study. Hence the work, here presented in an English garb, should be of no little value to students of folklore, and indeed to all interested in human thought and waywardness, since education, in general, and medical science, in particular, have both made rapid progress of recent years in Egypt, and the Egyptian Government's proposal to establish hospitals and dispensaries throughout the country will do much to eradicate the "cures" of the Old Wives and the village charlatans. So the day is coming, we hope, when the dangerous "remedies" of the modern Nile Dwellers will be no longer practised, but will be relegated to the archives of human error. As such the instances recorded in the present book should have increasing historical value.

The Arabic original is now out of print—in fact the British Museum possesses only Part I—but by this rendering into English of the relevant parts it is hoped that the material will be made more accessible than it otherwise would be. The translation has not been without difficulties. Besides being unvocalized throughout, as well as faulty in style, the Arabic text is none too well printed, and there are several textual errors. Still another difficulty that presents itself to a non-medical reader, is the exact rendering into English of the many medical terms used. Unfortunately the great Dictionary
of Medical Terms compiled by Dr. Sharaf,[1] which has proved [113]
very helpful, is only English-Arabic and not *vice versa*. This has necessitated a great deal of search and rectification. It is to be hoped that the medical equivalents are not too glaringly

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[1] *An English-Arabic Dictionary of Medicine, Biology and Allied Sciences*, by Dr. Mohammed Sharaf, Cairo, Government Press, 1926 (1st edition).

114 121 inaccurate. Even so, they do not detract from the real value or purpose of the book, which is to present to English readers a conspectus of the magic and diablerie still common amongst the illiterate villagers of Egypt. Soon they will be lost, buried with the past, and unable to be exhumed like the relics of the dead Pharaohs.

104 The notes added by the translator, as well as the pagination of the original text, are given within square brackets. In the matter of the transliteration the system of the Royal Asiatic Society is generally employed, except that k̤ = ق, and ء is not transliterated except when followed by a vowel. Standardized words such as *Koran* and *Allah* I have left in that state. Colloquial forms, which abound throughout the work, are given usually as near to the current pronunciation as is needful. I have ordinarily transliterated ج by g, but I have considered it unnecessary, however, to indicate the Cairene pronunciation of the ق (k̤) as a glottal stop. Besides hitherto unrecorded charms or magic spells, the Arabic text also contains numerous words and phrases which are not usually, or readily, found in the standard dictionaries. From a lexicographical point of view it has been considered worth while to indicate these.

114 128 The author, as Dr. Macdonald noted, "writes with the indignation of the qualified medical practitioner." The burden of his tale may well be summed up in the following lines:

"If you have cancer or nephritis,
Diabetes or bronchitis,
Heart disease, tuberculosis,
Or liver hardening with cirrhosis,
The doctor will, for sure, detect them,
And early treatment may correct them."

Hence he is very particular in all cases to add the canonical medical treatment as an antidote to the popular superstitious practices which he so scathingly records. He is also at pains to mention those drugs and herbs which are easily procurable by the Egyptian natives. As these sections are of no value as folklore it has been considered advisable to omit them in the interests of brevity, especially in these days of expensive

publication. For the same reason a number of sections in 114
which the author rambles into the realm of politics, and the 128
particular condemnation of the foreign occupation of the Nile Valley, have been passed over. The value of the book lies, not in these, perhaps pardonable, divagations, but in the faithfully recorded cases of popular folk-medicine and "curative" malpractices which existed, and still do exist, among the peasantry of modern Egypt.

Before the author begins his introduction on page 4 of the 121
Arabic text, his brother 'Āmir Ismā'īl prefaces the work with 114
two pages of explanation which may be summarized as follows. It is laudable for a man, he philosophizes, to make himself acquainted with the customs and habits of his own nation so that he may wisely choose whatever in them is beneficial. All races possess superstitious practices which they have inherited from the past, and which continue to persist because they have not been sufficiently combated. This was the reason why the author, 'Abd al-Raḥmān Ismā'īl, was impelled to compile the present work in the days when he was a student in Cairo. His object firstly, was to collect instances of superstitious medical practices amongst the common people, and secondly, to denounce the village quacks and the "old wives" who traded in such things. After the work had been published in the periodical called *al-Ādāb*,[1] it was suggested that when it appeared as an independent treatise it should mention the proper medical remedies, and those herbs most easily procurable by the natives themselves. This was done but, as has already been noted above, these passages are omitted in the present translation since they are unnecessary. It has also been considered advisable to modify somewhat the rather grandiose language of the author and express the sense in a more familiar English idiom. At the same time it has been felt that it would be a pity to remove altogether the flavour of the original Arabic, and, in consequence, where the phraseology is sufficiently picturesque to justify it, the rendering is as literal as is compatible with clarity.

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[1] A Cairo publication. See M. Hartmann: *The Arabic Press of Egypt*, Luzac & Co., London, 1899, page 63.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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PART ONE

AUTHOR'S INTRODUCTION

To those who wish to investigate the secret of the folk-medicine of the modern Egyptians, we offer new data which we have obtained after diligent search and careful scrutiny. For it is a secret which those who have it treasure, and take care not to divulge, as if it were the philosopher's stone or the *arcanum* of alchemy. Yet, if it were among the actualities which are corroborated by scientific proof and intellectual evidence, impostors would not hide it behind veils of falsehood, nor gild it for the minds of simple people, who trust in it and consider it a heavenly thing and a divine science. I am referring to a low trade and mean occupation, which charlatans engage in as a means of obtaining spoil and as a source of plunder. Indeed we ought rather to designate them as public robbers because they go round the countryside sometimes in company, sometimes alone, so that no village is free from their mischief, nor does any land escape from their guile. Some of them disguise themselves in the garb of pious derwishes and of learned *ulemas*. Others make the speaking in a foreign language the snare by which they appropriate much of the property of those whose strength has been reduced by diseases, and who are ignorant even to-day of the methods of physicians and of the water-holes of healing. 121 755

It is strange that the only thing one can understand from the jargon of these swindlers is that apparently they have devoted their lives to the extraction of the treasures of spiritual sciences. So that, when they say anything, you see simple folk welcoming them and magnifying their value. And they have no excuse for so doing, except that the roots of these follies have for long been planted in their thoughts. They have been scared by the tales of the "old women" whose 755

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755 sole desire morning, noon, and night is to forge such like absurdities, regarding which "*Allah has sent down no authority*."[1]

Would that the young men of the present generation would confine themselves in their medical experiments to what neither benefits nor harms them. Instead of doing so, however, they repeat the experiment again and again, asserting that what did not succeed in the past was due to their own shortcomings, because they did not completely follow out the whole of the instructions in the "prescription," and as ill-luck would have it, the "prescriber," *alias* the quack, has done his utmost to improvise ingredients to which the hand of man cannot attain, for the simple reason that they do not exist.

Nevertheless, these "prescriptions" of the quacks are sometimes highly esteemed when it happens that the sick man is cured of his disease, or his health improves gradually, after his using the "prescription," or the supposed drugs; whereas the truth is that the illness passed through the normal stages [p. 6] until a cure resulted, a common rule in diseases. I may say that many of them succeed, not from any therapeutic peculiarities in them, but from the play of imagination and nervous volitional influence, which according to biologists in most recent times, has a very dangerous action upon the constitution.

000 Professor B—— mentions a famous incident. Sentence was passed upon a criminal guilty of murder. The Criminal Court handed him over for experiment to a learned physiologist who wished to prove clearly the influence of imagination upon vitality. He therefore tied up the arm of the criminal after blindfolding him, and addressed him as follows: "Your soul will depart without your feeling anything, because you are going to be bled to death." He then lanced the man's arm slightly, and poured over it a stream of lukewarm water, which the criminal took to be blood flowing over his body, and within half an hour his appearance changed and he died as if from loss of blood.

Another savant records that two youths were rivals for the love of a fascinating girl, till jealousy forced them to take steps so that one of them might free himself from the com-

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[1] [Koran, xii. 40; liii 23. Tr.]

petition of the other by taking a draught from a cup of poison. 000
So they brought their witnesses (as is the common custom with Europeans in such cases) into a darkened room in which they had previously deposited ten cups, one of them containing quick poison, and the remainder other liquids. The two set to work, but as soon as they had raised the cups to their lips they immediately fell dead before they could taste anything of the poison, for, in fact, both cups contained ordinary drinks. E

757 151 [p. 7.] I happened to be one day in the Ḳaṣr al-'Ainī Hospital, Cairo, in the operating theatre, when there appeared a youth suffering from a complaint which did not call for an operation of more than ten minutes. He was afraid, however, of the pain of an operation and would submit to it only on the condition of his being chloroformed. So the chloroform was brought, and the operator made the patient imagine that he had taken a great quantity of it, and that he would be rendered completely insensible. Before long he fell into a deep sleep and completely lost consciousness like one who has inhaled a great amount of chloroform; while all the time the physician had not made him smell one drop of it. F

755 Now that we have demonstrated by actual instances the influence of imagination, there only remains for us to set down here, in order, all the falsehoods and absurdities in which the "old women" trade; for anyone who buys from them comes away fleeced. And since these stupidities as a whole are named the *Science of the Rukka*, or of the "old wives," there can be no harm here in mentioning the reasons for their being called by this word *Rukka*, the meaning of which we have discovered after a long investigation and uninterrupted inquiry. It is as follows:

Rukka in the technical terminology of the "old wives" is a piece of wood upon which flax is shaken in order to get rid of any foreign substance that might spoil it. This was the practice in ancient times as well as to-day. In special circumstances, however, the word is applied to the women who are at home, whilst the men are busy in the fields. For they usually gather together of an evening to perform whatever duties their husbands or masters may have imposed on them. Then the talk goes round amongst them at those times and

755 they boast of the success of a "prescription," which one of them has tried [p. 8] upon one of her daughters, or on one of the members of her family. Hence the association of these "prescriptions" with the *rukka*, for according to the dictionary *rikka* as well as *rikāka* means "an old woman of weak intellect."[1] In my opinion one of these two expressions is the reason why these "prescriptions" are named the *Science of the Rukka*. For whoever considers these absurdities, both old and new, will find that they have their source in the imagination of the "old women" and in their foolish beliefs. And since the original design in the composition of this treatise was to investigate these beliefs, we now proceed to retail them to the readers of our book by way of admonition and warning.

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[1] [The author definitely spells the word as *rikka* (بكسر الكاف), which is the form of vocalization adopted in the *Supplementary Catalogue of Arabic Printed Books in the British Museum*, 1926, p. 99. (See above also, p. 5 *f.n.*) The form *rukka*, however, is more in agreement with the vernacular pronunciation. Besides the above explanation of the origin of the word, Vollers has proposed another etymology, viz., from the Italian *Rocca*. (See his article in the *Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft*, Vol LI, p. 322.) Reference may also be made to Lane's *Modern Egyptians*, chap. xi. Tr.]

I

THE TAḲRĪFA

THIS is common in the villages and in most of the cities. 164 It affects the person afflicted with *ḳarfa*, which is chronic intestinal catarrh. The manner of treatment is such that it 757 forces upon the sick person strict dieting, so that he only eats 755 a little bread with salt and pepper after midday. In the morning he goes daily to the "old woman" who seats him before her with his lower extremities extended, while she remains behind him stretching her limbs out in the same way. Then she squeezes him with her hands against her chest, and rubs his stomach with increasing violence. After all this she squeezes his head, for the space of half an hour, with great force, the result of which is often death. She does all this without heeding or fearing evil consequences.

And would that she were satisfied with what she has now done after this manner! But now she brings a piece [p. 9] of cloth which she wraps round the neck of the patient (the dumb animal! nay, the deaf stone!) and chokes him until he loses consciousness. She thinks nothing of this, although such an "operation" often results in the death of the wretched patient. (We may seek to excuse her by saying that it is not her fault. because the rules of the "prescription" force her to do it) Next she repeats that operation many times in succession and ends up by giving the patient half a lemon dipped in a mixture [278] of oven ashes, salt and black pepper. Sometimes the invalid has to endure this for a full month.

As for the diet, it is the best part of the medicine; but there 756 is no merit in that due to the old woman, because she does not 755 order it with the intention of healing the sick, but to make the rubbing of his stomach easy for herself. The extraordinary thing is that she asserts that the whole of the benefit is in the

756 choking, and that the speed with which the disease declines
755 depends proportionately upon the employment of violence or gentleness in that " operation." But the most astonishing thing is that the sick one, if recovery be vouchsafed him, goes home loud in the praise of that " old woman," saying, " The disease was creeping about in my feet in a terrifying manner."

And what did this creeping amount to (had this inexperienced fool known) except the numbness of his nerves resulting from the compression of the spinal cord, and the suffusion of the brain ? And were it not for the fact that he has but few days left to spend in his folly, the deceitfulness of the " prescription " of that old ogress would disappear. As for the lemon and the common salt, sometimes they are of advantage if the sourness of the stomach be slight, but they cause serious injuries if it be severe. And since the " old woman " who " prescribed " this is ignorant of these [p. 10] details, her making use of the salt and the lemon mingled with oven dust in curing—or rather in killing—her patient was only for the purpose of intensifying the imagination and gilding the deceit.

II

THE MASH'ŪMA

777 THE common people mean thereby ill-omened (fevers).
764 Their " prescriptions " would make a bereaved widow laugh !
755 For example, if the village be under a fortunate star, and there be found in it " the bone of the unbeliever "—one of the bones of the metatarsus—which is the stock in trade of one of the " old women," or of whoever gains possession of it, it is far ahead of all neighbouring towns and villages. A very old man, one of those who were present at the Siege of Sebastopol, related to me that he almost met his death in this siege whilst he was occupied in extracting this bone from a corpse in the firing line.

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[p. 12.] But if it be impossible to find such a bone, then the 777
"old woman," entrusted with the cure of the invalid, orders 756
one of the patient's relatives to go alone in the second part of 755
the eve of Friday into the cemetery and bring back a brick from a grave in which no one has been buried for a long time, and place it under the head of the fevered patient. It will improve his health.

The "old women" also employ for a relapse a wonderful 755
"prescription," which I have seen with my own eyes in the case of a patient whom I was treating for a violent intermittent fever. When I was by his side asking him how he felt, and thinking about his cure, I heard a commotion in the courtyard of the house. On investigating the matter, I saw a woman in one of the corners of the room where the patient was, busy muttering spells over some dry cakes of cattle-dung. Outside I saw another "old woman" of an evil countenance, with a white girdle over her black clothes, bearing on her head a sieve with a great crowd of boys behind her pelting her with stones, and jeering at her. She took no notice of them nor scolded them (because the "prescription" demands that), but continued advancing thus towards the door of the sick-chamber. Then when she reached it she began calling out, "Is there anyone here in a relapse (*mankūs*) ?" The other woman who was inside the room answered, *mā 'indanā mankūs walā wag' fī rūs.* "There is no one in a relapse here, nor even with a headache," and she hit her in the face with one of the cakes, over which she had ceased reciting the spell. But the other kept on asking and the other answering her, after the same fashion, until the twelve cakes were all used up. Then the "old woman" outside carried them in the sieve upon her head and went off, I know not where. [p. 13.] I was seized with the greatest wonder and astonishment, and on asking for an explanation, was informed that this "prescription" was the cure for a relapse. As for those cakes, the "old woman" would throw them into a disused well that same night. My comment was that in that case there was no necessity for salts of quinine, and I withdrew from their midst leaving them to their folly.

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III

THE MUSH̲ĀHARA

778 THIS is a quantity of stones of different colours, strung together along with a quantity of pieces of silver and gold which are called *masāk̲h̲īṭ*. (*Masāk̲h̲īṭ* in the technical language of the womenfolk means people on whom the wrath of Allah has alighted for some crime they have committed in the past, and on account of which He has changed [p. 14] their original nature.[1])

778 The owner of this necklace sees herself possessed of great
751 wealth, because, as she and others like her imagine, it protects
842 a woman during confinement from the misfortune of barrenness,
755 and those afflicted with ophthalmia from the ill-luck of losing
an eye. Accordingly you see every barren woman, and everyone afflicted with ophthalmia, having the *mus̲h̲āhara* brought to them from some place or another, even if the woman's circumstances compel either her mother to pledge her ornaments, or her father to pay out all his money as security for the stones to the owner of the *mus̲h̲āhara*, lest they should be lost. The strange thing is that so many believe that the life of their sick one depends upon whether the "old woman," who is the owner of the *mus̲h̲āhara*, hands it over or not.

IV

THE KABBĀS STONE (ḤAGAR AL-KABBĀS)

778 THIS should rather be called the principal of the *mus̲h̲āhara*[2]
751 because, whereas the *mus̲h̲āhara* protects one from falling into

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[1] [*Masāk̲h̲īṭ* (singular, *mask̲h̲ūṭ*) = images. Some of the parts of the above-mentioned conglomerate necklace or *mus̲h̲āhara*, are in the form of crude images, such as are commonly found in the ruins of antiquity. The popular belief in Egypt was, and still is in some places, that the statues and images [773] of the old Pharaonic times were really the vestiges of ancient infidels whom Allah in His anger had petrified. Tr.]

[2] [i.e., the stone of greatest efficacy in the necklace. Tr.]

harm, this stone rescues one from harm after one has fallen. 778
Both in the case of a confined woman, and also of those 751
afflicted with purulent ophthalmia, it is rubbed and its water drunk.[1] Our experience is that the harm done by the *kabbās* is greater than that done by the rest of its brethren which are strung with it on the cord of absurdities and vanities, because the harm of these is limited to their delaying the patient from calling in a doctor; but *it* is harmful on account of its rubbing upon the *maḥār* (or mother of pearl shell which is employed), as a result of which hard particles fly off which do not agree with the ailing eye, for when they are put into it the cornea becomes ulcerated. As is obvious, there is extreme danger in this.

V

TREATMENT FOR THOSE AFFLICTED WITH LEPROSY AND SYPHILIS

SELDOM do the people of the villages and the remote places 757
treat themselves properly for the diseases which trouble them.
In consequence you see among them people afflicted with 164
leprosy, syphilis and elephantiasis. When these diseases
sorely oppress them, they go off to the village of Balkamūna
in the Gharbīya Province, where there is to be found a man
famous in all the provinces of Lower Egypt, named Al-Ḥāgg 759
Aḥmed. They complain to him of their pain. He immediately
uncovers the patient, splits the flesh of his back and extracts 757
from it pieces of the muscles or sinews. He then sprinkles over 218
the wound certain powders, the best known of which is blue

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[1] [This last statement requires some elucidation. The *ḥagar-al-kabbās* is a small stone which is rubbed on a mother-of-pearl shell (*maḥāra*) into which drops of water from a *ḳulla*, or earthenware jar, are let fall. This water becomes whitish after a little, and is then drunk by the patient, or in the case of eye-disease, as mentioned above, it is used as an eye-lotion. Hence the injury done by the particles of the shell to the cornea. Miss W. S. Blackman in her book, *The Fellaḥin of Upper Egypt* (p. 203) mentions this "cure" and gives an interesting photographic record. She asserts, however, that it is called *ḥagar eṭ-ṭarfā* (stone of the tamarisk). Tr.] 218 169

757 tutty (sulphate of copper), the very thing which hastens the
278 destruction of the patient. Do not enquire about the wealth
of this quack. I have been informed on good authority that
759 he died last year leaving 35 feddāns [or acres] of very rich and
extremely fertile land [p. 17], as well as jewelry to the amount
of £800 worth, in spite of the fact that a few years previously
he did not possess a thread or a date stone. His practice has
been inherited by his eldest son, who even to-day continues to
disseminate errors and absurdities among the foolish natives.

757 For those who are leprous they use a recipe very well-known among the "old women" from ancient times. It is (as follows) to eat every morning for ten days the heads of scorpions, dried over the fire. Then the patient will be cured—if Allah permits it—or else he will perish at the hands of the minions of Satan the Accursed.

164 There is no doubt that syphilis, leprosy, and elephantiasis
757 are among the most grievous diseases before which many
physicians stand abashed. Accordingly it is necessary that
those so diseased should make haste to present themselves
before a skilled physician, because the drugs which may effect
a cure are not easily procurable in the villages. In any case
one should employ for syphilis, in the first stages, compounds
of mercury; and, in the second, iodide of potassium and other
compounds. As for leprosy, the cure of it is entrusted to the
future. In the case of elephantiasis there is no other way but
to call in a surgeon.

VI

RĪḤ AL-MAS͟H'ŪMĀT

164 THIS word is made to embrace piles and dysentery. Some
people claim [p. 18] that they have been endowed with the
757 faculty of rooting out these diseases. Such a person is a woman
in the neighbourhood of Farnawī, one of the villages in the
[759] district of S͟hubrak͟hīt. When anyone suffering from relaxation

comes to her, and he has taken it into his head that he is 757
suffering from piles, he offers her whatever money fate has bestowed on him, and she requites him with an "operation," of which the following is a description. She takes between the tips of her fingers a special preparation which she puts in the *anus* of the patient. Next she moistens her fingers with oil and puts them a second time into the *rectum* (*mustaḳīm*) until when she has succeeded in mixing the oil with the first special prepartion, she draws out her hand, which has become smeared with coagulated blood, resulting from the morbid local inflammation. As a result the wretched patient thinks that these bloody lumps are the piles, and so it is noised abroad in the mouths of the populace of that village and those adjoining it, that such a woman tears out piles by the roots, pulling them out in her hand like the liver of fowls.

Sometimes the patient finds relief for a day or two after this "operation" because, for one thing, the oil softens the local inflammation referred to above, and, for another thing, the woman by inserting her hand into the *anus* sets up an expansion of the sphincter (*ʿāṣira*). So the patient for these two reasons finds a slight relief from suffering. But this method is obviously fraught with injury, especially if the reader knows that the source of the dysentery is in the germs which the "doctress" carries and with which she infects the patient.

I once heard a government official say that being afflicted 759
with piles, he was recommended to a man called the Shaikh Aḥmad al-Khaṭṭābī in [p. 19] the Khurunfish district of Cairo who was famous for the treatment of this disease. The latter treated him for three weeks, at the end of which the trouble and the pain ceased. I bethought myself of coming face to face with this man, in order to make his acquaintance and derive b[illegible]fit from him. In fact, I went to him three times on three successive days and entreated him both for myself and for many of his companions, that he might enlighten me about the secret of the medicine, and take me as one of his
pupils. To this he consented, but only after he had put me on 757
my oath that I would not divulge his secret to any doctor or layman; besides (he added) if I did reveal it to anyone, it would lose all its virtue and be useless. Thereupon he brought out a

757 paper containing some powder and said, " I make plasters of this antidote (*tiriāḳ*), and place them upon the piles ; then they are cured by the permission of Allah." I took a little of it between the tips of my fingers, and on examination found it to be orpiment (*rahg*) one of the compounds of deadly caustic arsenic (*zarnīkh*) which the common people call " ratsbane " (*samm al-fār*).[1]

" *We took it, reckoning it pure gold, but the blacksmith's bellows revealed the vileness of the iron.*"

Anyone who has the least smattering of the science of medicine knows that this element is caustic. Barely have a few days passed after using it before a man endures considerable pain, and when he recognises the source of his mistake and the consequences of his foolish belief, he is filled with remorse.

VII

SUNSTROKE (BAṬḤAT—AL-SHAMS)

753 THIS is cerebral congestion from the effect of the solar rays, and the manner of its treatment according to the method of
755 the " old wives " is, that the key of a door which faces towards the east, and is opened counter-clockwise is procured. (There must be found [p. 21] in every village at least one house fulfilling these two conditions). The " old woman " takes this key, procures woollen cords (or braces) and wraps them round the head of the patient, using the key which is in her other hand to accomplish this. In this way she keeps on bracing these cords until she can do no more. All this while the patient behaves like a bereaved woman, lamenting, and calling out, and crying for mercy, but there is none to pity. Next the " old woman " begins massaging the patient's head. I have seen her with my own eyes after all these operations, biting the skin of the patient's forehead between the eyebrows, in a fierce manner even to the effusion of blood. For she believes that the bones of the patient's head have become

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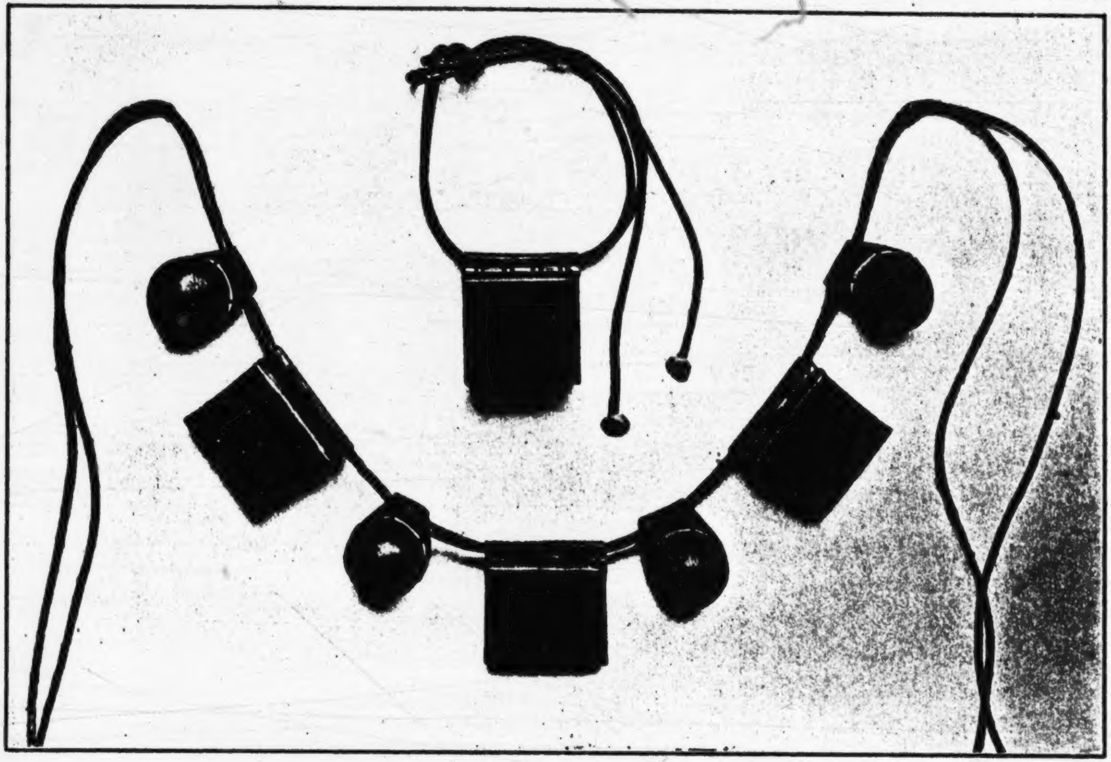
[1] [Arsenic trisulphide. Tr.]



Moslem Amulets
Two stamped leather amulets of the kind used in Egypt to-day as prophylactics.
(By kind permission of the Trustees of the British Mussum.)

displaced, and that she can by such means put them into their place again. 755

VIII

"SPLITTING OF THE EYE" (BAZLAT-AL-'AIN)

THIS is used generally to mean chronic granular ophthalmia. Those afflicted employ for its cure a piece of fleshy red meat[1] which is hung in front of the afflicted eye or eyes.

I do not know any good this piece of meat does except that it quickly becomes a source of putrefaction, and a collector of the different morbid causes which lead to the complete loss of the patient's eye [p. 22]. [164]

IX

AMULETS[2]

THE common people constantly have recourse to those who monopolize the art of making amulets, in order to obtain help by their means when calamity troubles them and sickness makes them complain. Whenever a person is afflicted by some hysterical weakness or nervous disease, his relatives say of him that he is certainly bewitched, or in possession of a *jinnī*. They do not know even yet that sorcery and the interpenetration of bodies (by evil spirits) are absurd and falsified by all evidence. No intelligent person has ever accepted such things, unless what Hārūt and Mārūt[3] introduced in order to 751 754 753 996

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[1] [Sometimes instead, a small bored red bead, usually a carnelian (*'aḳīḳ*) is suspended from the head of the sufferer. Tr.]

[2] [*Tamā'im*, plural of *tamīma*. Tr.]

[3] [These are the names of two rebellious angels of Babylon, who were noted magicians. According to the Koran, ii, 96, the devils at the time of King Solomon taught mankind sorcery "*and what had been revealed to the two angels in Babylon, Hārūt and Mārūt.*" The identification of the names is uncertain. They may be of Zoroastrian origin. Consult the *Encyclopedia of Islam, sub voce;* and Horovitz, *Koranische Untersuchungen*, 1926, pp. 146-8. Margoliouth (in the *Moslem World*, 1928, p. 74) endeavours to trace their names to the Jamnes and Mambres or Jannes and Jambres, the magicians of the time of Moses (2 Timothy III. 8), and of the N.T. Apocrypha (Gospel of Nicodemus v. 5). Tr.]

754 mislead people, as is revealed in the Noble Koran. And no
753 one can tell whether the people instructed by *Hārūt* and *Mārūt*
776 did not divulge this secret through the ages, until sorcery
perished along with them, since it was difficult for them to put
it into writing.

000 In the story of John Sīrāf [?] (جون سيراف),[1] the prince of sorcerers in the land of the English, who claimed that he was the successor (*khalīfa*) of *Hārūt* and *Mārūt*, there is much that will convince you of their errors and their lies. [p. 23.] For that person resided in an old castle, surrounded by trees thick with leaves, so that anyone beholding it is made to fancy that it is an ancient cavern over which the ages have passed. Sick people come to him and interview him in a large room, the walls of which are variegated with tapestry of a deep black colour, on which are outlined ugly-looking pictures, at which the joints of the body tremble. They think that they are in the Valley of the Jinn and the Devils. Before long the walls of this chamber split at the four corners, and those present then hear a terrible din, a little after which there are revealed men of ugly appearance and hideous shapes, with drawn swords in their hands. Then what sick person (or " bewitched " according to their opinion) would not be impressed by these phenomena, and his heart be perturbed with fear, due to the deceits of that scheming wretch, especially when the room, in spite of its being so spacious, is lit by a single candle ?

Then the sorcerer takes the patient by himself into one of the small rooms from which the assistants have first gone out, and making him sit down, mutters over his head certain names and gibberish which he has fabricated. Next he puts the seal upon these absurdities by giving the patient water which he asserts has a secret power and a hidden influence, one of its peculiarities being that it expels the Jinn from the body and undoes the work of bewitchment. Such were his habits and practices until he heaped up great wealth and acquired large possessions. When he died last year (1891) leaving no heir, the government took over his belongings and gave them to almshouses, and objects of piety and benevolence.

[p. 24.] The North African (or Moorish) quacks have a ready

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[1] [I have been unable to trace the source of this strange tale. Tr.]

[p.24] The North African (or Moorish) quacks have a ready 756
market in Egypt because it is the common belief of the deluded
people of that land that the Moors have great ability in casting
out the Jinn from the bodies of mankind. I saw an example of
this two years ago, when I was called in to treat a person [164]
suffering from chronic meningitis. Whilst I was with him one
day, suddenly those present stood up out of respect. I turned
round to know the reason why, and beheld a man, a Moor with
a long beard, of a ghastly colour and squalid appearance. He
had entered the room, and those present were going up to him
and kissing his hand to obtain a blessing thereby. I asked
who he was, and was informed that he was Al-Ḥāgg Muḥam-
mad of Tlemcen, and that he had been brought in in order to 755
drive out the accursed devil that had entered into the body of
this poor wretch, and had made him toss upon a bed of pain
and suffering.[1] When I heard this, I said, Allah help us!
The Moorish Shaikh then took something out of his bag and
threw it into a flaming fire, which they brought him at his
request. At once there went up a smoke which almost choked
the bystanders. Those who feared for their lives went out
of the room, and contented themselves with watching from
the door what else might happen. I myself remained, I am
glad to say, with the others inside. I saw him after this
incensing "operation" arise and approach the patient, and tie
one of his big toes with a thread of silk, the end of which he
himself held in his hand. Next he began saying to those
present, "Verily the *jinnī* which is in the patient, is one of the 755
children of the unbelieving kings, and he will only go out from 776
the body by being condemned and despised and ill-treated. [753]
So it is you, who are here present, who must beat him." He
pointed to the sick patient, and two of those present [p. 25]
procured pieces of cane, bared their forearms and began
beating him furiously, whilst he was crying for mercy and
groaning. And the wonder of it was that the father of the
poor fellow, who had up till then been treating him with
clemency and gentleness, was one of the two who undertook
to expel the *jinnī* from the body of the patient, although if
they had only known it they were really trying to drive the

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[1] [The term generally used to describe such a person is *mu'afrit*, which means possessed by an evil spirit, or *'afrit*. Tr.]

755 776 life out of him. As for the Moor, whenever he noticed any slackening or fatigue on the part of these two beaters, he encouraged them to keep on by saying, "The *jinnī* is about to depart. Your sick one will soon be healed by the expulsion of this cursed son of an unbeliever who rebels against the Faith."

Feelings of pity incited me to restrain the beaters from their work, but the patient's father reproached me, and told me not to interfere with what did not concern me. So I returned home, in wonderment at what I had seen.

X

"THE LODGER" (*NAẒIL*)

756 "Said an old hag, There has come to me
787 A *jinnī*, who stays with me as a "lodger,"
539 Come ye to him, and come again soon,
776 That he may cure your sick!"

A CERTAIN old hag will assert that a *jinnī* keeps her company, and is like a husband to her. Hẹ reveals to her knowledge of the unseen and informs her about all the medicaments that the sick require. There is one such who is famous, an old wife in the Province of Buḥaira, in the village of Ḳahūḳiya, and there is another in the village [p. 28] of Umm Ḥakīm. The former has surpassed the latter, because her *'afrīt* (whom she names Shaikh Sīd Aḥmed) is very pious. Women come to her from all directions, and bring her presents of money. (The money of course which is brought to the Shaikh, is called a *present*, not a *payment*). The procedure is, the "old wife" 755 776 787 778 enters a darkened chamber, locks the door securely, and remains in it for a short time. Then she returns to her clients with some drugs, which she asserts her Shaiṭān (or devil) has requisitioned from remote districts and distant lands by means of his "assistants." She tells them to take these medicaments

because the *Jinn* (lit. the "Helpers") have brought some 755
of them from India, and others from Sind or from the land near 776
to the mountains of Ḳāf,[1] and other such nonsense and absurd- 787
ities, "*as to which Allah has sent down no authority*."[2] 818

Sometimes certain of the women request her to allow them to enter the darkened chamber that they may participate in the "blessing" (*baraka*) of the *'Afrīt*, to enable them to obtain their ends. (For this she receives another "tip.") One of them thereupon enters the chamber which is pitch black. After a short time she hears either a weak voice, or a loud one which utters the name of her sick one, or her own name, if she be the patient, and explains to her the date of the illness which has afflicted her or her sick one. It assures her that its "helpers" have undergone great suffering and distress in the course of producing the beneficent antidote (or rather the maleficent poison) from the ends of the inhabited world, and that the invalid will be cured after a few days.

[p. 29.] The truth of the matter is that the ill-omened old 756
hag has employed certain women (who consider themselves brokers or traffickers, and so on, and who have the entrée into every house) as her spies to bring her news of patients in every village and hamlet, and the date of their illness, in full detail, as for example, that no child of such a woman is living, and that so and so is barren, and so forth, according to their methods of deceit and their innumerable ways of stratagem and chicanery.

One of the duties of these women is to advise sick women or others to go to Shaikh Sīd Aḥmed, when such a scene as the one we have described takes place. There is nothing of course in the chamber of the so-called Shaikh except the old woman herself who has already become acquainted with what the spies have conveyed to her, and which she repeats, not in her own voice of course, to the sick woman, or to one of her relatives, who implicitly believes in the Shaikh, and impoverishes herself in order to propitiate him.

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[1] [In Islamic cosmology the mountain range that surrounds the earth. Tr.] [777]
[2] [Koran, xii, 40 ; liii, 23, etc. Tr.]

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XI

FRATERNIZING WITH THE JINN

791 SOME of these false sheikhs and scandalous tricksters claim that they possess charms or spells which they procure from the *Jinn*, whom they have under their jurisdiction. One such individual who gained the confidence of fools in the past, was a person whose domicile was in the city of Damanhūr.[1] Caravans used to go to him from all the villages. One of the people
787 of my own village of Zemzem,[2] who had beheld this fellow and
791 had actually seen [p. 30] his tricks, told me that he was once invited to this village. (His story was as follows): When he drew near we saw his servant behind him carrying a bag. So we asked him what it contained. He said it held clothes for his servant and himself which they needed to wrap themselves up in when they summoned the Jinn. His host was a man named Sarūr in whose house there had assembled a mixed crowd of men and women. The women he established in the upper part of the house on the roof. When a great part of the night had passed, the Shaikh extinguished the lamp, which was the only one in the dwelling that had been lighted. Then he motioned to those present to go away from the corner of the room in which he was sitting, because he pretended that the approach of the Jinn was at hand. Meanwhile he was making the audience imagine that he was busy changing his clothes, and that his servant was doing likewise. But the truth is that they were both busy extracting trumpets from their bag, along with similar instruments of deception and delusion, which they consider assist the imagination. When they had finished this, they then began beating a copper bell with great force so that it seemed to those present that the Jinn (lit. the " Helpers ") were falling upon them from the ceiling, and issuing from the bowels of the earth, and coming forth from all directions accompanied by this prodigious clamour and tumult. The

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[1] [A well-known town in the Delta, capital of the Buḥaira Province. Tr.]
[2] [In the Delingât district near Damanhûr. Tr.]

two men followed all this up with a blast on the trumpet to 787
such a pitch of violence that the veins of their necks were almost 791
torn asunder. This "operation" was to assist in confirming the false opinions in the minds of the onlookers. After this the Shaikh turned to the lord of the house, after he made him stand up, and said to him [p. 31] "Your guests and lodgers have come to-night, what have you provided for their hospitality?" Then the fool of a man apologized to him, saying, "Please be so good as to excuse me. I did not think that they would eat as we do." "Never mind," said the Shaikh, "there is no harm done." and he shouted as follows, "Oh, Dharbākh" (which is the name of a jinnī, one of his "helpers," as he asserted), "Come to me." At once a voice was heard answering him, "To hear is to obey! Oh, my lord I am here; command me to do what you wish." He then said to him, "Bring us here delicious, fine-smelling fruits." Thereupon the "helper" went off, and returned after a second, accompanying his steps with a mighty tumult and a monstrous din, which made all hearts palpitate with impatience and alarm. Then he placed many pomegranates before the false Shaikh, who said to him, "Whence do you bring these?", to which he replied, "From the garden of Munāshela" (which is a village about a mile distant from Zemzem). At this the audience was astonished at the agility of this painstaking messenger and his celerity in fulfilling desires. Then they all received what the Shaikh gave them of that fruitage, except one who lay upon his back roaring with laughter, because he was aware of the secret of what was in the bag. As soon as the Shaikh saw him do so, he said, "So you laugh at Al-Murāḳib, the Protector of the mountains of Upper Egypt, or at Al-Shammākh, who is the master of the complete deed and the fulfilled word, whose armies extend to the country of Yemen and to Hind and Sind. Oh, ye people, escape quickly lest the evil of his uproar may touch you and yours!"

Immediately the men began rushing and pressing together in the search for safety, dreading what he might impose upon the house in the matter of misfortunes or disasters because of that mocking laughter.

[p. 32.] But when the women (up above) perceived this, 787 791 they thought that the Jinn had killed one of the party, so they began shouting and weeping and bemoaning in a most heart-rending manner. It so happened that the fugitives wandered from the path, and their imaginings drove them into a sheep-fold, in which were the sheep belonging to one of the fellāḥīn. As soon as they entered this enclosure the sheep were scared because of them ; but they thought that they were devils, and this groundless imagination was fixed in the minds of some of them to such an extent that they fell upon the ground motionless as if dead. Others began scurrying over the ground ; and while the rest were scaling the walls, one of them turned behind him and saw two rams butting each other. He thought they were killing one of his companions who had fainted in the middle of the pen. So he cast himself from the top of the wall to get away from that revolting sight, and fell into a worse and more revolting state, namely, by smashing his legs and his hands.

As for the fraternizing Shaikh, he had taken the opportunity [685] of the emptiness of the house, and he and his servant had stolen the ornaments and garments therein, before they both went outside, fuming and raging at the shamelessness of that person, the jeerer, who was deserving of the anger and displeasure of the Jinn.

Strange to relate when the mistress of the house on the following days perceived the loss of her jewels, she praised [771] Allah, and thanked Him, that the Jinn had not taken anything else. " What would I and my children have done," she said, " if the Jinn had abducted me ? " And such absurdities are still remembered and handed down by people who believe in their authenticity.

XII

[p. 33.] SAND DIVINATION (ḌARB AL-RAML)

Most of those engaged in this are Sudanese. One of them will seat himself in the middle of a road near the wall of a house,

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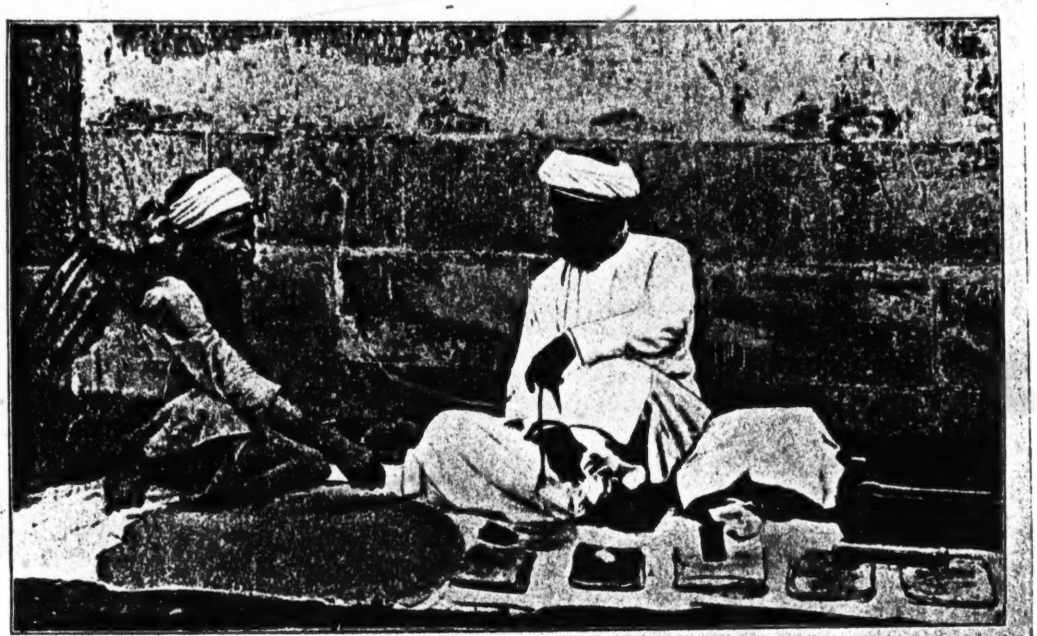

EGYPTIAN GEOMANCER

Seated by the roadside these fortune tellers, who are generally Moslems from North Africa, read the future from the imprint made by the petitioner's hand in dry sand. Rosary and books on magic complete his outfit

Facing p. 35.

with a little yellow sand in front of him. To him resort the 787
illiterate, lazy rabble that he may foretell to them their dark 791
future and their unfortunate fate. He draws lines on the sand with his finger, after the patient has crossed his palm with silver (for they imagine that the veils of hidden tidings are not raised except after the payment of white money). Then he says to him, " You are a poor man. There is a tall, brown fellow " (hereupon he adds a description of him), " who speaks evil of you behind your back and seeks to accomplish your ruin " ; or, " There is a girl who sadly weeps for you night and day " ; or, " You are restless in your thoughts, and there is a knotty problem ahead of you which will, if Allah allows it, be solved." And in like manner he manufactures all kinds and varieties of stories and tales, and if it is in agreement with what circulates in his mind, then the enquirer will rise and kiss [576]
the hand of the fortune-teller in gratitude for his goodness since he has scattered from before his eyes the clouds of doubt, which hindered him from a knowledge of future events.

XIII

SHELL DIVINATION (ḌARB AL-WADAʻ)

In this branch of pernicious beliefs the practitioners are
Sudanese women. One of them seats herself, like her country- 787
man, in the middle [p. 34] of the road with a collection in front of her of sea-shells, and fragments of minerals, green and red and black, each with a special name indicative of something that is passionately desired. Their clients are mostly women who had no education in their youth, and now that they have grown up have become submissive to the power of the imagination. One of them comes to the Sudanese hag and divulges to her her complaint of being jilted by her sweetheart, and his abandonment of her and his trifling with her ; or, she describes to her the anger of her husband towards her and his driving her from his house ; or, that she is barren, etc. Then when

787 the hag has drawn from her her desire, she takes hold of her shells with her hands and throws them on the ground, and answers her after this fashion: " The shells tell you that a handsome, upright young man is in love with you but his forsaking you is excusable because a young woman, named so and so, has written lovingly to him; but Allah will drive away all cares and troubles from your heart since your lover will come back after so many years, and so many months, and so many days"; or, perhaps she says to the next: "Your husband dislikes you because he loves your neighbour. This shell said so, look at it." Or else she says to the other one: " You will have a child but you must call him Shaikh so and so. When that happens you must give me a douceur," and so forth.

As for shell-divination and the drawing of lines upon sand, and the writing of amulets, and the fraternizing with the Jinn, we have described them in detail since they are among the maladies of society [p. 35] which lead many times to the destruction of souls. There is no cure more successful than putting the law on the track of such quacks who cure nothing but imaginary ills. It is incumbent upon Government officials, to repair the damage done, and parents ought to warn their children against having recourse to such charlatans.

XIV

BIBLIOMANCY (FATḤ AL-KITĀB)[1]

[791] THE practitioners of this craft are Moors[2] and Sudanese.

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[1] [Literally the *Opening of the Book*. Sometimes the Koran is the " Book " employed. A photographic illustration of such Koranic divination may be found in Miss Blackman's work (p. 196). But in this section the " Book " may be any copy of a Koran Commentary (such as *Baiḍāwī*, or Zamakhshārī, or a collection of Ḥadīth (Bukhārī), or more likely one of the multitudinous Magic Books on sale everywhere. Also " playing cards " are given this name in popular speech, and are, naturally, used in this way by fortune-tellers. Tr.]

[2] [There is a current proverb, *Al-Maghrabī kaddāb yiftaḥ al-kitāb*, the Moor is a liar who opens the Book. Tr.]

Ignorant and stupid people are their customers, who ask them 787
to raise the veil from the face of their future lot. This is the procedure: first the man opens the "Book," which will be variegated with florid decorations and bright colours. Next, he gazes intently into the face of the fool sitting before him, and critically examines his appearance and guesses his nature and circumstances. The latter answers him in accordance with what he has divined. For example, he will say to him, "It appears that you are very worried because of poverty and straightened circumstances, nevertheless, cheer up, for your Lord will give you an easy time after this poverty, and in a short while [p. 36] your pockets will be packed tight with money, so that you will be puzzled as to how to spend it." Or he will say to him, "You do not sleep all night long because of thinking, but relief from Allah is at hand, for, verily, He has sent to you one who will endeavour to solve the problem that is before you, and who will save you from it. Only the 'Book' says, that you must pay money and allow me to write a talisman [778]
so that your care and grief may vanish, and your affair may be accomplished," and other similar statements.

XV

AMULETS AND TALISMANS

Readers know from what precedes that those who practise 778
bibliomancy, and divination with sand and shells, do not 789
confine themselves to the foregoing which is nothing more than 832
the diagnosis and explanation of troubles, but they lay ambitious claim to a knowledge of the secrets of curing by means of the writing of amulets and talismans[1] to induce love.

Every stupid woman seeks the help of these charlatans on the supposition, say, that her neighbour or her fellow-wife has written against her what will make her husband hate her. So the charlatans write for her some names which are absolutely

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[1] [*Aḥgiba* plural of *ḥigāb*.]

778 789 832 without connotation, such as Shamhūrish, Dahinish, and Budūḥ, etc.[1] on a patch of paper in disjointed letters. This clearly demonstrates the way by which they mislead the minds of simpletons. They also order them to burn these as incense with substances known to them, which help, in their opinion, to plant love in the heart. Or they write Rawwāsh ibn Hawwāsh or Zuḥal (i.e. Saturn), etc. [p. 37] in the manner indicated, and then charge them to fumigate them with herring skin at the time when the people concerned cohabit, if the aim be the creation of hatred and dislike between her husband and the woman he loves and desires. And there is no doubt that quacks such as these are a menace to all praiseworthy characteristics and noble customs, chiefly because by their endeavouring to cause a separation, by means of imagination, between a husband and his deluded wife, they obtain access, in the majority of cases, to the circumstances of the family, in a manner that is other than admirable. This they [789] accomplish because during the shell-divining and bibliomancy and amulet-fabrication they learn the name of the woman, and the names of the members of her family, and their deep secrets. As a result, they do all they can to create mischief and ruin.

778 789 791 The writing of amulets in the villages is not undertaken by Moors only, but there are other individuals who have special haunts which are known to the *fellāḥīn*.

In the neighbourhood of Kôm al-Akhḍar in the Buḥaira Province, the reputation of a number of them was spread abroad to the effect that they were able to fabricate amulets and talismans, until the value of one of them was not less than a hundred piastres [a little more than a pound sterling]. They then order the owner of the amulet not to open it, for if he do,

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[776] [1] [Names of magic import. Shamhūrish, or its variant, Samhūrish, appears in Islamic angelology as the title of a celestial being. There are many such figures, no doubt of Gnostic, or even earlier, origin. E. Blochet in his *Études sur le Gnosticisme musulmane* (in the *Rivisti degli Studi Orientali*, 1909, p. 719 ff.), identifies him with St. George of the Apocryphal Acts. He says (p. 726) that the name has no meaning either in Hebrew, in Aramaic, or in Greek; so he finds an Iranian parallel. But I would suggest that the word ultimately comes from the Hebrew Shemhammephoresh, i.e., the Ineffable Name of God.

[751] [801] As for *Budūḥ*, it is the well-known group of letters often found in Arabic talismanic squares, and still written on envelopes as a prophylactic. The numerical value equals 2468. Tr.]

the effect anticipated from it will depart without avail. For a 778
certain friend, whom I know, they wrote an amulet which did 789
not produce the desired result, in spite of his strict adherence 791
to their wishes. (This was only that Allah might reveal to
him their falsehood and wickedness.) It so happened that
when this friend was in despair he exercised his skill on the
covering of the talisman, which was [p. 38] of lead, until he
opened it. When the paper inside it appeared, he found it
did not contain anything at all in the way of writing. Yet
he did not cease in his mind to place some credence in the
soundness of amulets and talismans, for when he saw that the
circumstances were such, he was afraid in his mind lest the
writing had flown away because he desired an acquaintance
with what was inside it, and so he did not stop performing the
requirements prescribed to him by the quacks. What added
to his hallucination was the fact that he told his case to an
ignoramus, led astray like himself, and he began upbraiding
him for what he had done, and proved to him that no one dared
to do what he had done unless he had been blinded, and the
sign-posts of his vision had been effaced.

Let us return to the shell-diviners. These women do not 787
confine themselves merely to enticing people into their nets 791
in the normal way, but they vie with one another in practical
"healing." They have thus often been the cause of the
setting of the sun of life for many persons of note both men and
women. One, whose word I cannot doubt, informed me that
he was inhabiting a neighbouring dwelling in which was a girl [753]
suffering from chlorosis ("*yellowness*" [sic]) whose mother [164]
went to one of the shell-diviners and informed her of her
daughter's condition. The "old wife" assured her that a
jinnī had fallen in love with her daughter, and had entered
into every part of her body and was the cause of her complaint.

When our poor friend heard that, she could not resist throw- 756
ing herself at the feet of the "old wife," beseeching her to take
pity and cast out the *jinnī*. After pretending to refuse and
put difficulties in the way, the "old wife" at length granted
her request, and accompanied her to her dwelling. As soon 755
as she saw the patient [p. 39] she ordered them to bring her
half a pound of metallic lead and melt it over a fire. When

755 the molten lead was brought, she took it, and after placing a vessel containing water upon the head of the patient, began pouring the lead therein. But Allah ordained that the vessel tilted a little so that the stream of lead fell on the patient's neck and face, and caused wounds which were the cause of disfiguring her for ever afterwards. But the strangest bit of it is that, when the lead fell on her face and the poor girl began to scream and cry for mercy, the "old wife" said to the [1116] mother, "The screams you hear are those of the *jinnī* on coming out."

XVI

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[p. 40.] THE MEASUREMENT OF THE ATR[1]

"Hark to the words of a hag
[539] To her patient whose sorrow has departed:
'Our Lord the Shaikh has come
To measure your *Atr* for you.'"

THE monopolizers of this variety of absurdity are the *Faḳīhs*[2] of villages and towns, and the *fellāḥīn* have a true belief in it, without any question of doubt. When one of them is ill his people send his *Atr* to the *Faḳīh* (or *Fiḳīh*) along with some coins (which they call the Shaikh's bribe [*rashwa*]).

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[1] [The *Atr* (in classical Arabic, *Athar* = vestige, track) is any article of personal property belonging to the sick person, which is taken to the sorcerer in order to assist in "curing" the owner. Generally a handkerchief is used for the trick. The quack ties a loose knot near the end of the handkerchief, [755] and then measures a span with his hand. He grips the other end with his other hand to mark the spot. By a surreptitious pull he can lengthen the space a little between the knot and his hand. Then on a second measurement it is found that the distance has grown, which is indicative of a speedy "cure" and prolonged life. Naturally this is only done when there are chances of the patient's recovery. On the other hand, when the case seems hopeless, the quack safeguards himself by saying that the *Atr* is against him, but that a charm may do the trick. Miss Blackman (p. 185) has a mention of something like this use of the handkerchief but does not give this manipulation which was graphically explained to me by a *Shaikh* from al-Azhar University. Tr.]

[2] [Generally poor village schoolmasters with a minimum of education. The colloquial form is Fiḳih. Tr.]

Whenever the *Atr* is brought to him he takes it in his two hands 789 leaving between them a distance which he measures with his 791 finger to begin with, then after that he begins mumbling and 755 exorcising, while placing the *Atr* near his mouth. Then when he has finished this he measures it a second time, and so on. Then he informs the messenger that the *Atr* has increased and that it is a prognostic of a speedy cure and a long life. Beyond 755 this nothing will result unless by the writing of a talisman. 789 One cannot avoid observing here that the *Faķīh* looks out for the state of the mother of the patient. If he sees her weeping and in distress, and she has told him of the violence and continuance of the patient's illness, then after the second measuring he tells her that the *Atr* has not increased, and that it is necessary to write a talisman (*ḥigāb*) from which will result every advantage and blessing (*baraka*) for the patient. Then if the patient is cured, his people afterwards say that he was cured only through the talisman of the Faķīh ; but if he dies, they say that the *Atr* did not increase, and the *Faķīh*, whatever happens, is regarded by them as truthful.

XVII

[p. 41] "THE TIED" (AL-MARBŪṬ)

By this is meant that some quacks skilled in the knowledge of 754 spirits are hired by certain individuals to "prescribe" against 832 their enemies "*tying*," that is, impotence in time of coition. The truth of the matter is that since pudicity and perplexity are special properties of some men, they sometimes assert their mastery in the days of wedlock. So that the bridegroom believes that this is simply the result of what some quack doctor has done. And what increases the illusion in its effect on him is that he has listened since childhood to such tales of "*tying*," and believed in this absurd "art."

And as for the manner of releasing the "*Tied*," it is as 000

755 787 And as for the manner of releasing the "Tied", it is as follows: One of the quacks, whom we have mentioned, measures the *Atr* [see f.n. above, p. 40] of the one who is "*tied*" by the ropes of illusion, and shackled with the chains of worthless beliefs, and says to him, "There is something written against you on a piece of bread which has been eaten by a fish in the sea, and it is not possible to release you from your trouble unless by obtaining this fish." Then he describes to him the appearance of this fish from his own imagination, and asks him for a fine sum for bringing it to him in a few days. When the time comes he brings a fish in his hand in whose mouth he has placed the piece of bread with the letters written thereon, and delivers it to the patient who, when he has opened its mouth and seen what it contains, thereby helping to confirm the statement of the "prescriber," he begins to be cured little by little because of his belief that he would be cured of his illness when he attained [p. 42] his prize, namely, the above-mentioned fish. But there is no doubt that the whole thing is a trick. As for the "prescriber" or "spiritual sage" he has already obtained his fee.

842 918 Sometimes it happens that the wife of an elderly person dies, after he has exceeded the bounds in procreation for some time, and he marries another wife, only to find that he has no longer the power of procreation, so he repairs to the swindlers who either take the opportunity to cheat him, or "prescribe" for him certain tonics such as ambergris, and other pungent substances such as black pepper (*fulful Sūdānī*), and a powder made from the penis of the crocodile [p. 43] and so on. But all these are of no avail unless to diminish his wealth, and his reason, and his health (if he had any). He is not aware that the time of his youth has passed.

[539] "How far away is the time of youth to one turning back;
Yes, and there is no fear of old age to one going forth."

For Time has assailed him with its burden, and it was most essential for him to spend the rest of his life at ease, protecting his health from the influence of diseases, caused by his previous
931 incontinent behaviour. For there is no more injurious thing for the body, nor one more destructive of life, than sexual indul-

gence. Ibn Kalada[1] has said: "He who desires to sell his 831 life cheaply let him give a little of his time to fair women."

XVIII

THE 'UḲĀD AND THE KHŪṢA ?

THE *'Uḳād* is a thread of wool which is tied in seven knots, 755 over each of which a special incantation is pronounced, and it is 778 blown upon by people who are well-known for this "operation." 751 The *Khūṣa* is made of the branches of palm-trees which the patient presents on the morning of some Friday at the instigation of the *Faḳīh*, who receives it and recites over it a number of incantations and protective circular charms [164] (*Taḥāwīṭ*). Both of these are used in the curing of colds and fevers. This is why you see many children with them round their necks, because they are more liable to these two ailments. In the villages a mother is considered negligent of her child if she does not place round its neck an *'Uḳād* of this sort, which will keep him, as she asserts, from illness.

XIX

BARRENNESS ('UḲM)

ONE of the best "remedies" for barrenness is to walk over a 842 person who has been killed. This is a famous old "remedy," even with inhabitants of large towns. It is long since we used to see, when our professors were lecturing on Anatomy in the Ḳaṣr al-'Ainī College [p. 45] many ladies coming to the dissecting room in order that they might pass over the dead, with this object in view.

Some women who are barren carry a silique of wool dipped in 000

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[1] [This is Al-Ḥārith ibn Kalada, a contemporary of the Prophet Muḥammad, and at one time a celebrated physician at the court of the Persian King Anūsharwān. Tr.]

842 Some women who are barren carry a silique of wool dipped in
827 powder of Egyptian natron, and this "prescription" is in
[778 fact, said to be advantageous, when the barrenness is due to the acidity of the fluids secreted by the woman's reproductive organs, for it counteracts its effect, without preventing the male fertile germs, as formerly was the case, from reaching the female generative germ.

XX

THE MUTA'AWWAḲA

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755 THIS is the woman who gives birth, but whose children die. The best known "cure" is an "operation" which is performed every year, called "the Cutting of the Follower" *ḳaṭ' al-tabī'a*), which is practised by certain special "Old Wives." The manner of it is that the "old wife" comes to the husband and his spouse and makes them stand in front of one another. Then she takes a fowl which is jet black, without the least blemish in it, kills it, extracts its entrails, and plucks its feathers, and cuts a thread which she has previously joined between the thumbs of the husband and his wife. Then she collects all these things for the safety of the woman, and buries them all under the threshold of her room. Thereupon she departs after receiving a weighty reward in compensation for the fowl. By such acts the women believe that the child will live, as if these had [p. 46] a secret influence on its life. It is customary to repeat this experiment at each birth if success follows it the first time. The payment also is increased two, or three, or four fold, and so on, with each successive year, the mother believing that if she does not do so, the "operation" will not succeed in future.

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776 They explain all this by saying that the husband has a mate (*ḳarīna*),[1] one of the Jinn, who is seized with jealousy

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[1] [This is a very widespread belief. In most cases, it appears, the "mate" is of the opposite sex. That is, a man is possessed by a *ḳarīna* (fem.); a woman, by a *ḳarīn* (masc.). But there are exceptions noted. Miss Blackman (p. 69 ff.) does not note the sexual difference. Dr. Zwemer, in his work, *The Influence of Animism on Islam*, devotes a complete chapter (VI) to the subject of the *Ḳarīna* or familiar spirit. See below the section entitled "The *Ḳarīna*" p. 46). Tr.]

and envy of the man's wife because she has children. So, to 842
appease this jealousy and love, the *ḳarīna* kills them. To 716
prevent the *ḳarīna* from doing this it is necessary to have
this "operation," which certain of the "old wives" undertake [755]
as a means of obtaining money from the simple and silly ones,
both men and women.

XXI

KILLING OF CHILDREN BY THE INDIGO SPELL

(*Mushāhara bi'l-Nīla*)[a]

The women believe that if a woman wearing a dress dyed 842
with *nīla*, i.e. with indigo, enters the presence of a childing 822
mother, the latter will have no more children. They assert 754
that the only "cure" for this is for the mother to visit an
indigo dye-house and then she will be all right.

XXII

SPELL CAST BY THE EGG-PLANT

(*Mushāhara bi'l-Bādhingān*)

Inability to have more children sometimes results from a 824
spell cast by the black egg-plant (*bādhingān*) (or *bidingān*) [or 842
Mad-apple, *Solanum melongena*]. The woman who would be "cured" of that has only to visit a field of egg-plants. (Those engaged in the service of the Gardens in Cairo, as in other cities [p. 47] and towns, set aside a part of the enclosure for the growing of the black egg-plant, because they make a lot of money from the visitation of these women to them.)

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[a] [Indigo (*nīla*) is regarded as ill-omened in Egypt. It is seen at funerals [777]
on the faces and hands of the mourning women. There is a well-known curse
in the vernacular, *Gātlak an-nīla* (*al-ba'īd*) = May indigo come to you (present
company excepted!) Tr.]

842 Barrenness, they believe, sometimes arises also from the
754 entering in unto the mother of a woman who has weaned her
862 child. The " cure " in this case, according to their statement,
[751] is for the barren woman to carry a rag of wool wet with the milk of a woman who has recently weaned her child.

XXIII

THE ḲARĪNA

164 THE Bedouins name this the " Heat " (*Ḥarāra*). This name
753 is used generally for the class of diseases of the throat (the original symptom of which is difficulty in breathing) such as diphtheria (*k͟hunnāḳ*) and convulsion and drying up of the uvula, and the like. The " prescriptions " of the " old wives "
757 are self-contradictory in regard to its " cure." Some of them think that the correct thing is cauterisation [p. 49] of the child upon its frontal and terminal crown (*yāfūk͟h*). The child, however, finds relief from their folly, inasmuch as there is
[165] soon set up inflammation of the brain (meningitis), of which it dies.

[539]
> " And he who does not die of cautery will die of something
> else ;
> The " prescriptions " are many but the death is one."

Others again hold to the belief in replacing the cauterisation by scarifying with a razor instead, on both sides (front and back). This is the method followed by the Bedouin. The Arabs of Mariūṭ and al-Ḥāgir instead of all these, bore two holes in the child's ears through which they pass a thread of
753 red silk. The " old wives " have different absurd theories as to the cause of this disease in children. Some of them
776 claim that every male child has a sister (*uk͟ht*) among the Jinn,

and every female child a brother (akhkh);[1] and since the sister 753
loves her brother, this Jinn sister tries to destroy her real 776
brother so that she may enjoy his love. And that is why whenever a mother curses her son she says to him *Ḥabbatak ukhtak* (*may your sister love you*).[2] The only object in cauterizing the child, or scarifying his head with a razor, is to punish [755]
him so that his sister may have pity on him and betake herself to her lover among the Jinn that he may leave him to them. Another group assert that "the Mother of Screeching" [*Umm Kuwaiḳ*] (i.e. the owl) was in former times a human being, and
had a child with whom she was once enraged, so that she beat [773]
him so violently and painfully that he died. Then Allah punished her for that, for He changed her from human to animal form, and she has ever since so remained, enraged against the human race from which she was driven out [p. 50], and whose ruin she is constantly endeavouring to bring about, in that at sunset she passes above children, spreading her wings over them and smiting them with this disease. Some people say that one day a certain holy man struck the owl on the head with his hand to make it cease injuring people, but it would not be corrected, and that the black lines on her head are the marks of the fingers of that good man after the blow.

This practice resembles what the people of the Times of 773
Ignorance[3] used to believe long ago in regard to the *Hāma* (a 628
kind of owl), that when the blood of any slain person remained 825
unavenged, there went out from his brow a *Hāma* which kept on screaming out: "Give me to drink of the slayer's blood." As the poet says:

"Oh, 'Amr neglect not my protecting and my wrong, else will I beat thee till the owl cry, 'Give me to drink.'"

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[1] [Miss Blackman, *op. cit.* pp. 74–75, is seemingly wrong when she states that there is no brother (akhkh). Tr.]

[2] [This is another instance of the extensive belief in the *Ḳarīna* (see above p. 44). Dr. Klunzinger (formerly physician at Kosseir on the Red Sea coast) in his work, *Upper Egypt, its People and its Products* (London, 1878), deals with popular medicine on pp. 397–400. On p. 383 he writes, "Even in the official registers of deaths kept by the physicians the *ḳarīna* was till lately a regular variety of disease, exactly corresponding to our convulsions." Tr.]

[3] [The *Jāhilīya*, or Pre-Islamic days. cf. *Acts of the Apostles*, xvii, 30. Tr.]

FOLK MEDICINE IN MODERN EGYPT

XXIV

THE CHANGELING (MABDŪL)

776 855 695 783 Some people say that a child is sometimes a changeling, that is, that the Jinn have substituted it for another, and for this they have two "remedies." In the Buḥaira Province, and its neighbourhood, they put the child, about sunset, inside an oven which has no fire underneath, and close the door tightly, and leave it there until the morning. When they abandon it they say," God is between us and you; give *us our* son and take *your own.*"

But in Gīza and Benī Suēf, and the surrounding districts, in place of the oven they choose an abandoned tomb, in which no dead person has been buried during a year at least.

These are the two savage methods followed. Often the child dies for want of breath inside the oven, or the tomb; or else some dangerous accident may lead to its destruction.

XXV

[p. 51] "THE FATHER OF FEATHERS" (ABŪ RĪSH)

"*Oh, Father of Feathers, please God, you will live.*"
(*Yā Abū rīsh in shāllāh ta'ī sh*).

842 751 If a woman have one child only, and whenever she has another boy or girl it dies, she immediately invokes the aid of an "old wife," one of the sorceresses, who bids her dress the child, who she fears will die, in a great peaked cap,[1] decorated with feathers from a goose or common hen or turkey, and to gird it with a black shawl, and thereafter set it on a black she-ass, with its back to the front. Then the boys and girls of the village, or city,[2] gather round him, and call out with one voice, "*Oh, Father of feathers, please God, you will live!*" They go round the village in this way three times, or even four to make quite sure.

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[1] [*Ṭarṭūr*, like a dunce's cap.]

[2] [I have seen such a procession in Cairo near the Citadel. Tr.]

FOLK MEDICINE IN MODERN EGYPT

XXVI

THE TANFĪḤA

E
F`
THIS is one of the absurdities, the validity of which has 164 overcome the minds of the simple in our happy country. The people of Upper Egypt call it the *Talwīḥa* ("*swinging*"), but amongst the inhabitants of the towns, such as Cairo and Alexandria, it is called (المعوه) (sic) [Al-Mu‘aumad (?)] and F so also by the people of the provinces of Lower Egypt. With 755 all its names it means the acute relaxation of the bowels, which attacks very young children. The "cure" is as follows: The "old wife" orders the child to be placed in a spacious woollen cloth which is wrapped round it several times till it is used up. Then two women take hold of the ends of this cloth, with the wretched child imprisoned in it, and turn it round following a perpendicular circular motion during more than a quarter of an hour. This, in truth, is the easiest and quickest way to kill children, because the child, who has the misfortune to be born to the person whose thoughts are controlled by the power of [p. 53] delusion and ignorance, is seized with concussion of the brain due to the wicked circular motion, and dies E from lack of breath. In the cities mothers procure drugs 757 from the "old wives"; the one which I have seen most 278 commonly used being white lead (ceruse) (or carbonate of lead), mixed with the white of an egg. Now it is well-known that ceruse contains poisonous materials. So when it is placed on the child's belly it screams with pain. Then the mother continues in the thought that his weeping is only from the original pain which was the cause of her treating it with such a harmful remedy.

XXVII

"THE STRANGER" (GHARĪBA)

F
THE common people use this term generally for a number of 164 eye ailments, especially sha‘ra or trichiasis.[1] Many women 000

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[1] [Introversion of the eyelid.]

Many women

756 in the villages are famed for the " cure " of them. One of them is known as Sitt Umm Ḥusain. She resides in the village of Ibrāhīm Aghā in the district of Shubrakhīt. Her " specific " 757 is to take a piece of the hollow stalk of the bamboo (*ghāb Fārisī*), and split it lengthways down the middle, and place in it the skin of the patient's eyelid. In view of its flexibility it squeezes upon the eyelid and hinders its nourishment, so that it becomes violently inflamed, perhaps extending to the neighbouring parts, and destroying the eye. The result[1] of this ill-omened treatment is that the part squeezed becomes affected [164] with gangrene, the eyelid becomes separated from the eyeball, and the latter becomes exposed to all external influences, great, and small, there being now nothing to protect it from injury, not to mention that the patient through this " operation," becomes ugly and hideous, the sight of him frightening children and offending grown up people.

Many others besides Sitt Umm Ḥuṣain there are who go round the villages rooting out eyelids as if they thought Allah created them unintentionally.

XXVIII

HEALING OF THOSE BORN BLIND (CATARACTOUS)

757 298 A NATIVE of Mandūra in the Gharbīya Province claims that he has done some of the things for which Jesus (on whom be peace !) was noted, and has made the blind to see (or, rather, to describe him by what results from his works, he gives those who have eyes, eyes to see). What he does is, he anoints the ophthalmic patient with *koḥl*, which he makes himself, and in ten days he is " cured."

I was informed by one of the leading people of the Buḥaira Province about some antimony [*koḥl*] which he bought from

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[1] [Dr. A. F. MacCallan, writing in the *Egyptian Gazette* (April 7th, 1927) on the development of Ophthalmology in early Arabic Literature mentions this popular Fellaḥīn " cure," and adds : " *The trichiasisentropion is occasionally cured* (by this method), *but always at the expense of a shortened upper lid, and the frequent production of lagophthalmos.*" Tr.]

this quack at a crushing price. When I examined it I found 757
the bulk of it to be powder of ginger [*zangabīl*]. All the people 278
of the provinces believe that these substances are exciting and burning in proportion to their usefulness. But what I say is, that the employment of ginger as *koḥl* is very like the use of the powder of *Jakarūtī* (?) one of the plants of Brazil. (It is violently corrosive and is used to produce artificial purulent ophthalmia).

The Moorish quacks employ in cases of ophthalmia a medicine 164
which one of them divulged to me as a great secret, saying that 757
it was composed as follows: 278

(1) One drachm of the liver of a cock with ten claws;[1]

(2) One drachm of clarified fluid from the eyes of an old hoopoe[2]; [p. 56] (3) five drachms of *s̲h̲ūnīz* (i.e. "*the black seed.*")[3]

Boil the whole over a slow fire, and after it becomes dry and powdery, let it be used as *koḥl*; then the old hazinesses will become clear, and it will put an end to the ulcerations of the eye and cataract.

XXIX

THE INFLUENCE OF GUISES AND TITLES AND APPELLATIONS

Fate has decreed that the Egyptian should neglect his 181
rights and rate himself lower than the Westerner with his different origin and nationality. So you see him not only being let down in the eyes of Europeans (who have some right for glorying and boasting on account of the benefits they have attained in Science and Civilisation), but also in the eyes of such

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[1] [The colloquial word used is *mu'aws̲h̲ar*, and it is said that when such a cock enters the house and crows, an angel will appear. Tr.]

[2] [The *hudhud*, or *hidhid*, the celebrated bird in the Solomon Saga.]

[3] [This is the seed of the Fennel flower, black cummin, and is often named [824]
in the vernacular, *ḥabbat-al-baraka*, the "seed of the blessing," because its other name, the "*black seed*" is not propitious. See the *Wiener Zeitschrift für die Kunde des Morgenlandes, XII*, 207. Tr.]

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F
181 Orientals as the people of India, China, the Hedjaz, Persia, and Dongola, and even the Berbers who have depended on his favours from ancient times even to the present day. So that you see him [i.e. the Egyptian] although he is a native of the land and its rightful owner, living only from hand to mouth in
E
F spite of his many endeavours to better himself.

181 The same may be said about the Egyptian physician because "*the singer of the tribe does not charm.*"[1]
759 He is lower in rank than any foreigner, even if he be distinguished for skill and
554 dexterity in his profession, whereas his foreign colleague may be distinguished for stupidity and ignorance. Anyone who considers the truth of the matter can be certain that our native patients glory in their illness when they can say, " Our doctor is Monsieur so and so, possessed of such a certificate from the High School of Paris," or, that he is Mr. or Signor such and such, although the patient in the majority of cases does not know anything of the circumstances of his physician, whether [p. 58] he be French or English, for example, or Italian. And the fact is, if we try to excuse him because of the justifiable reputation of Europe, we cannot do so when he resorts to the Moor Sīdī al-Ḥagg al-Tlimsānī, or Shaikh 'Amr al-Rūḥānī, or Sīdī Muḥammad al-Sūdānī, or others who deceive and ensnare simpletons. The reason is that their country is without adequate medical schools, so where can they learn medicine ?

I beseech the reader to be patient while I relate to him an event which happened last year. While I was sitting one day with some colleagues in a certain place, some people entered
E whom we knew, accompanied by a Shaikh in the garb of the
[291] Hedjaz (full-sleeved gown, *kisā*, and " hunchbacked " turban).
E
F He was introduced to us as Shaikh Manān ibn 'Abd al-Manāf,
756 and that he was a physician who " cured " every ailment.
755 We received him with the utmost respect and reverence, and made room for him in the highest place. Then when we
E
F opened a discussion, he began to inform us of strange " cures."
[52] He soon began to rave in his talk and to beat about like a blind she-camel in a pitch-dark night, so that he imagined, I perceived, that none of those in front of him had any acquaintance with

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[1] [A quotation from *Ibn al-Jauzī* (12th Cent.). A prophet is not acceptable in his own country. Tr.]

FOLK MEDICINE IN MODERN EGYPT E F

the medical sciences, but were all liable to be duped by him. 756 One of his claims was that he could extract the heart and the 755 liver and replace them by the corresponding parts of a dog. We rejected this statement on account of its absurdity and want of agreement with the canons of medicine. When he saw our opposition he said, " Do not wonder at that for I have cured this last year 40,000 [p. 59] patients suffering from *ascites abdominalis* in Mecca alone." Then we became more sceptical than ever of his statements seeing that the whole population of Mecca is not more than 60,000, and two thirds of them have not always this disease. That would be absurd. So, when he rose to go, he invited a number of us to accompany him, amongst whom was as it happened that excellent Doctor 'Abd al-Fattāḥ Efendī Fahmī, chief physician of the Government Hospital at Assiut, and Doctor 'Abdallāh Efendī S͟haukat, head of the Ḳaṣr al-'Ainī Hospital.

When we arrived at his house we found him the centre of the afflicted and the refuge of the unfortunate. Crowds streamed towards his dwelling from every side so that they blocked the way for the passer-by. When we were seated he began " treating " his patients. This was after he had laid aside his robes and put on others which made him look like the E successor of Al-Ḥārit͟h ibn Kalada.[1] Among the crowd he F had a girl afflicted with filthy suppurating scrofulous glands, [164] so he called on his servant Ṣiddīḳ to prepare a poultice of *lait* [278] *caillé* (*leben zebūdī* or *yaghourt*). Then he himself brought forward a dish from which he took out a little powder of sweet marjoram which he scattered on the poultice, and put this on the neck of the poor girl, whose mother took her away to where she might roll about on account of the burning pain (after she had satisfied the monetary demands of the professed physician).

Anyone who is acquainted with science knows that it is not possible to guard against the harmful effects of gathered pus E except by extracting it by means of surgical instruments. F

After the sick-visitation had come to an end we went up 756 with him that he might show us his chamber of drugs. We 278 found it a spacious place with hundreds of vessels containing

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[1] [See note above p. 43.]

756 drugs, salts and acids and alkalis with labels, on which were
878 written their names in Latin; in very indistinct letters on account of their age. The bystander could not help suspecting that this was merely the leavings of some pharmacist, which this man had bought up after the death of the owner.

On turning my head to the right I saw written on one of these bottles "sulphuric acid," so I asked his lordship about the contents of the bottle, in order to try him, that it might put an end to my suspicions regarding him. He answered straightway, "This is oil of mandragora, or apples of the Jinn." Then he produced a vessel gilded on the outside and said, "This is the *Koḥl* (stibium) of the Forty. It puts and end to obscuration of the surface of the eye, and I produced it myself by boiling it in oil of rose mixed with the grease of serpents forty times." He generously presented each of us with some to experiment with, but when we had left his dwelling we threw what was in our hands on the ground, except one of us who was determined to try it. He put a little of it in his eye, and the next day was afflicted with ophthalmia of the cornea which took him fifteen days' treatment to get over its evil effects.

Mark the difference, O you who are intelligent and skilful, between the dwelling of this ignoramus aping the physician and [p. 61] the clinic of one of our keen native doctors. You will find the difference distinctly visible. While the former rejoices in success and prosperity, the latter suffers ill-luck and neglect.

XXX

HEADACHE (ṢUDĀ')[1]

F
164 THIS is applied to many illnesses, but is only rarely an
753 original illness. It arises from decay in the bone of the occiput,

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[1] [Professor E. G. Browne, in his Fitzpatrick Lectures on *Arabian Medicine* mentions (p. 4) that this noun of pain appears in the Latin version of the Ḳānūn of Ibn Sīnā (Avicenna) as Soda (*Sermo universalis de Soda*), a term which must have bewildered those without the Arabic original. Tr.]

or from inflammation in the nerves. For that reason there are 164
few who do not complain of it every day. As the numbers of 753
the afflicted increase so, proportionately, do the methods of
the quacks in claiming to "cure" it. One way, which I know 757
by personal experience, is the "beating" of the temple-vein.
They mean by this the "cutting" of the temple-vein [with a
razor][1] because this is the place where one feels the pain more
than any other. The fame of a barber in the villages depends [555]
on his skill in the "cutting" of the vein. A man, called
Shurbagī, on the estate of Yūsuf Pāshā Kemāl in the district
of Shubrakhīt has a monopoly of the "beating of the vein."
For that reason the unfortunate from all villages make for
him, pouring in to him from every quarter. He has fixed his
fee for "beating the vein" at one dollar for each poor person [465]
whom this ailment has driven to him; while the rich pay
according to their appearance and as they wish (for there is no
way of stopping the generous). The belief in the efficacy of
this "cure" for *Ṣudā*ʿ by "cutting the temple vein" is wide-
spread in a like degree in the small villages and large towns of
Egypt. I have seen in the year [p. 62] just passed, in the Ḳaṣr
al-ʿAinī Hospital, more than six persons *in extremis* through
loss of blood due to an "operation" of this kind, not to mention
those who will have died before they could be brought in, or [165]
who fainted through heart weakness.

When the whole corporation of barbers was hostilely attacking the temple-vein, it said to them what has been said very appropriately:

"Someone else did wrong and I am tormented for your sake,
Just as if I were the forefinger of the penitent."[2]

Those who are accustomed to have recourse to cutting the 757
vein as a "cure" for *Ṣudā*ʿ will find in fact a temporary relief 164
after this "operation," resulting from the dulling of sensation
due to the loss of a large amount of blood by effusion; but when
the blood supply returns and the patient recovers his wonted
health he suffers violent pains and cruel aches once more.

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[1] [For an actual photographic illustration of this "operation" see Miss Blackman, *op. cit.*, p. 214. Tr.]

[2] [When a man is sorry for some action he may bite his finger in remorse. [152]
The finger is bitten though it was not to blame. Similarly with the temple-vein. Tr.]

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757 One of the methods of " cure " is to draw a cross[1] on the
temple of the patient with saliva. This way, if it be free from
[755] the harm of vein-cutting, is yet a bad innovation, and will not
please those who love the Divine Law, because it may give
place to the [p. 63] belief of foolish and simple people, instead
751 of to truth and reality. We have even seen many fools who
304 have tattooed[2] crosses upon their temples to guard against the
evil of *Ṣudā'*.

755 We shall now mention by way of wonder and curiosity,
not without doubt and scepticism, a method of which the
success is famous in all parts of Egypt for the " cure " of this disease. It is a charm (*'azīma*) which is recited by His Excellency Mahdī Bey, Treasurer of the Public Debt, and those afflicted with headache are immediately " cured." The matter has been verified by experiments and testified to by eyewitnesses. It has been emphatically stated to me that many from the farthest parts of Egypt afflicted with this ailment used to come to the capital with this object, and would return after having obtained a perfect " cure." All I knew about the effect of the charm upon the sick, was that there was no danger in it to life. It would have been well if His Excellency had explained it and imparted it to people in whose veracity one could rely. It is indeed, His Excellency's duty towards humanity in view of the affliction of those tormented with this very oppressive ailment.

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[1] [Many Moslem women wear crosses, or hang them on their children to
[751] drive away evil spirits, or *'afārīt*. At first sight it appears strange that
Moslems should be found wearing the Christian emblem. But it is really a
[776] case of sympathetic magic. The evil spirits are conceived as being of Christian
origin and therefore unvilling to approach anyone protected by Christian
[789] symbols. Miss Blackman, *op. cit.*, p. 65, has apparently overlooked this
explanation. The old story of St. Dunstan driving away the Devil by means of a horse's shoe, the devil's own emblem is a similar case. I am indebted to Miss A. Gibson, M.A., formerly headmistress of the Scottish School for Girls in Alexandria, Egypt, for this reference. We still use horse shoes for good luck without thinking of their long folk-history. For the prophylactic value of the cross among Moslems reference may be made to F. W. Hasluck, *Christianity and Islam under the Sultans*, I. pp. 30–31. Tr.]

[2] [For examples of tattooing amongst certain Egyptian lower-class types, see article in the *Bulletin de l'Institut d'Égypte*, vol. V. (1923). Willmore, *Spoken Arabic of Egypt*, pp. 364–5 gives some tattooing superstitions. See also Dr. Fouquet : *Le tatouage médical en Égypte dans l'antiquité et à l'époque actuelle* (*Archives d'Anthropologie criminelle*), Lyon xiii, 1899, p. 270 ff. Tr.]

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XXXI

SCIATIC NERVE ('IRḲ AL-INS)

By this they mean sciatica (*'irḳ al-nisā*), or nervous pains 164
chiefly in the hip. The causes of this disease are many, such 753
as hereditary venereal disease (which is cured by its own medicines) and the effect of cold and inflammation in the sciatic nerve, or inflammation of the spinal cord.

[p. 65.] One of those who were famous for the " treatment " 755
of this disease was a man of the people of Edkū [near Alexandria [756]
in Lower Egypt]. He takes his patient in the early morning outside the town until they come to a wide plain in which the box-thorn[1] grows. (It is a kind of shrub). He then chooses as much of it as equals the size of the patient's side, and recites over it charms[2] which he keeps on repeating for a long time. After that he scrapes aside the sand which surrounds its root, and when it is uncovered, he pulls it up. He next goes to a fire, which he had previously kindled, and in which are iron pins. He then begins cauterizing the bush in every one of its joints while all the time he is busily reciting. At the end of all these processes, he digs up some earth, buries the shrub, and the patient is " cured."

The explanation given of these " cures " is that sciatica is a 753
disease due to the influence of the *Jinn*, and the charming 755
drives out the *jinnī* from the body of the patient, and imprisons him in the shrub, while the cauterizing of this kills him inside it. It is marvellous that persons of any enlightened intelligence should absolutely refuse the treatment of physicians and betake themselves to this man who is just like all other quacks. He orders the patient not to publish the secret, for if he do, the disease will return worse than before. I was told this story by a friend who was thrown into this man's hands by
fate. And the extraordinary [p. 66] part of the story is that [158]
imagination had obtained such a hold over him on account of

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[1] [Arabice, *'ausag*, Latine, *Ausegum*. See M. Steinschneider, *Heilmittelnamen der Araber*, in *Wiener Zeitschrift für die Kunde des Morgenlandes*, xii, 222. Tr.]

[2] [*'Azā'im*, plural of *'Azīma*.]

753 his having divulged the secret to me that in two days after
755 this, the disease returned to him through imagination, just as
158 it had left him under the same influence.

XXXII

"NECK PAIN" (WAG' AL-RAḲABA)

164 THIS means either hoarseness of the throat or diseases of
the tonsils (lōzatēn). The "old wives" "cure" it in two
759 ways. (1) They make the patient hang round his neck a
755 huge bead of red stones, and (2) they order him to swallow a
978 boiled hen's egg at one gulp without chewing. The harm of
this latter method will appear from the story reported by the
Egyptian newspapers of date 13th November, 1892, about a
youth in the Daḳahlīya [Province] in whose throat the egg
165 stuck and he died shortly after. Perhaps this will be a warning
to those who are heedless and restrain them from trusting in the
nonsense of the "old wives" and the absurdities of foolish
individuals.

XXXIII

WORM EXTRACTORS (DAWWĀDA)

563 THESE are a community—the Ghagar and Nawar[1]—whose
756 origin is from Syria; some say from China; and some go so
far as to say that they are spread all over the world. They
854 claim that they can "cure" children who cry too much, by
755 extracting the worms (*dūd*) from their foreheads, pretending
753 that this is the cause of their continual crying. Dr. Muhammad
Efendī 'Alī Duwaidār relates that a little child of his
family was always crying, so the child's parents summoned

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[1] [Gypsies and vagrants. See *Encyclopedia of Islam*, under, *Nūrī*. Tr.]

the *Dawwād* (" *worm-extractor* ") to " cure " him. These are 854
his words : Whilst I was in the dwelling, this man arrived, 755
and I wished to witness his " operation " myself, only that, 753
before he should direct his attention to the child, according to
his wont, I directed my attention to what was in his hand
before the beginning of the " operation." I found in it a
quantity of cheese worms. When he felt that his trickery was
exposed and that he was openly disgraced, he sought safety
in flight."[1]

XXXIV

WORMS IN THE EYE (DŪD AL-'AIN)

ANOTHER crowd of quacks extract worms from the eye. 164
Most of these worm-extractors are women to whom silly
creatures come complaining of cracking of the eye and heavi- 753
ness of the eyelid. They have already a confused idea that
the pain they feel is due to " worms in the eye," whereas in
most cases it is nothing but granular ophthalmia.[2] The 757
" operation " is as follows : The " doctress " in spite of the
patient's dislike, brings a piece of sugar and, turning back the
eyelid of the poor creature, rubs the inside with it, until the
fleshy part becomes rubbed away and sticks to the sugar,
assuming the appearance of worms.

There is no concealing the dangers of this " operation " ;
one being the sticking of the eyelids to the ball of the eye. [164]
Many women have lost their sight by this ineffective treatment.
Perhaps the harm and injury which overtook them may be a
warning and admonition to others, so that no one will consent
to the absurdities of such imposters.

We counsel people not to accept the " treatment " of the 563
Ghagar [Gypsies] nor to pay attention to their judgments and 759

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[1] [A photographic illustration of such a " cure " will be found in Miss Blackman, *op. cit.*, p. 212. Tr.]

[2] [Trachoma, Arabice, *ramad ḥubūbī* (sic). Dr. Sharaf gives *ḥabībī*. Tr.]

4;Walker E-4 (no date) 1934 MR13 Fellahin MR13
(ca. 1890) Libyan Bedouin MT9

F
563 counsels. And they are not to be deceived by the fact that
759 certain men of science in Europe have recently arisen in support of the methods of "curing" possessed by the Ghagar and by the "old wives." It will not be long before they reverse their opinion.

XXXV

THE FARGĀN (TRIBE) AND HYDROPHOBIA (KALAB)

L
831 It is well-known that the Bedouin and Arabs who dwell in
164 the deserts and wildernesses, are harmed by their employing dogs as protectors and friends, and making them serve as guardians and watchers over their lives and possessions. Because of the wide-spread use of these animals amongst them, the chances of being bitten by them have increased.
L
752 They "cure" such by means of cauterization with a heated
759 iron, whether the person be afflicted with real hydrophobia or not, as is often the case.

It is firmly rooted in popular belief to-day that there is no escape from the evil consequences of a bite except "treatment" by this method at the hand of the *Fargān*, a small group of the Aulād 'Alī tribe,[1] who call themselves Marabouts (*murābiṭīn*). You see those who are bitten by dogs going repeatedly unto them, and seeking them out from all parts of the country and the farthest horizons, to obtain healing and relief from the distress of the disease. As for the above-mentioned "method," it consists of heating a piece of iron in the fire until it reaches the stage of being red-hot. Then the *Fargān* take it and severely burn the wound with it. And one of the observations which the patient must follow is to remain in a darkened room for the space of fifty days, during which he must not approach his wife. Otherwise the benefit [p. 71] expected from the "treatment" ceases.

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[1] [Desert Arabs. See P. Kahle: *Die Aulad-'Ali-Bedouinen der Libyschen Wüste*, in *Der Islam*, IV (1913), pp. 355–386. Tr.]

Libyan Bedouin MT9
EGYPT MR1

FOLK MEDICINE IN MODERN EGYPT L

Study and research have shown that the cases in which the 752
"treatment" of the *Fargān* proved successful were caused by 165
dogs that were not rabid. It happened one day that a dog
bit a man who was passing by. This man went to the encampment
of the *Fargān* in search of healing. They "treated"
him with cautery like the others. Not many days elapsed
until there appeared in him symptoms of real hydrophobia,
and night and day he was heard barking shrilly, behaving like
a dog in all his actions, while his teeth were gnashing in terror. L
In this state he continued for a space, then he died. F

Whatever may be the truth or falsity of the claim made by 114
the *Fargān*, they have only to bring their proofs and, when
their assertion is substantiated, we shall be satisfied with the
glory that our common people are better than the élite of
Western savants. But when we consider the matter we find
that such high skill in the healing art is not achieved as a
favour, but by habitual toil and industry. And the physician
Pasteur, whose fame has filled the two hemispheres, did not
gain his immense wealth and widespread reputation, except by
devoting his life to the discovery of what he achieved in the
treatment of this disease (namely, hydrophobia) after its cure
was (thought) impossible. The French government built for
him at their own expense a special hospital to which patients E
go from all quarters of the inhabited world. As for Egypt 757
we do not forget that the Khedivial Government has sent, for
the past six years, five of those afflicted with hydrophobia
[p. 72] to Paris to be benefited by healing at the hand of that L
famous physician. So if the *Fargān* are to be trusted in what 759
they assert, why then are they niggardly in publishing the 757
truth, and averse to the praiseworthy place in History that
would be theirs on their revealing it? F

Long ago, Galen said that those bitten by dogs benefited by 171
being given daily a drachm of burned powder of river crabs, 767
and the illness would cease after forty days.

The doctors of India use for those afflicted with hydrophobia
a draught of the Indian *Ḥuḍaḍ* or *Ḥaḍaḍ*, a drachm of it upon
an empty stomach for forty days, then the hydrophobia will L
cease. But it is not of the slightest advantage except it be 752
accompanied by, what the *Fargān* do in our country, "ironing"

4:Walker E-4 (no date) 1934 MR13 Fellahin MR13
(ca. 1890) Libyan Bedouin MT9

L
[752] for the space of forty days. The true reason for this the ancients did not know (or if they knew it, they did not speak
F
about it, or it did not reach us). But the erudite Pasteur
752 says that in this space is the crisis in which the invalid is
753 between the two states of recovery and danger.
791

XXXVI

THE ZĀR

F
755 (We do not know the true etymology of the word Zār,
787 whether from Zārā, a town in the North of Īrān ; or from Zār,
[192] an Arab village East of Yemāma. Most take it from *Ziyāra* [visitation], meaning thereby the coming of the "Masters"[1] into the presence.)

Fortune did not grant us to be eye-witnesses of the ceremony of the Zār so that we might speak of it at first hand, since the Kūdīyāt[2] object to the presence of men or even boys, so we relate this on the authority of the famous authoress [p. 73] Zainab Efendī Fawwāz. It was published in No. 200 of the valuable *Nile Journal* (*Jarīdat-al-Nīl*).[3] She says:

F
756 "There is a company of women called Kūdīyāt. They are
791 those who practice the Zār. Such women are the most undesirable and most wicked of charlatans, for they are female quacks. They do things which souls loathe, and at which bodies shudder. As for the women who agree with them they almost worship them on account of the powers to which they lay claim. They even go so far as to believe that if any woman speak in her own home, the *Kūdīya* will hear in her own
F
dwelling. The reason for this is, that the Shaikh or the *'Afrīt*
[776] [or demon] who possesses the *Kūdīya*, transmits the words to his devotee. For this reason the woman cannot speak, nor if

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[1] [i.e. the presiding women who are "possessed" by male spirits. Tr.]

[2] [The chief women of the party (*ṭā'ifa*) of the Zār, or rulers of its meetings (*agwāh*, plural of *gōḥa*).]

[3] [See M. Hartmann: *op. cit., index.*]

the *Kūdīya* demands anything, can she contradict her, lest the 756
Grand *Sh̲aik̲h̲*, under whose jurisdiction the demons [or *'Afārīt*] 791
are, may be angry. 776 And so the woman comes to her husband with bashfulness or with abuse, and if she is able to wheedle anything from him she does so. If not, she must sell something of her own property, and put a stop to the demands of the *Kūdīya*, somehow or other. If she should demand of one of them the performance of the *Zār*, the expenditure will not fall short of twenty or thirty guineas, not to mention trinkets, ornaments, and valuable garments which the *Kūdīya* asks from her, with the statement that the *'Afrīt* [or demon] has come to her in a vision and demanded of her such and such. So the woman is compelled to yield to the demand for fear that he will [753] cross her and cast her into sickness."

"Now I shall explain to my gentle readers what I have actually seen myself [p. 74]. On one occasion one of my lady friends invited me to visit her on a particular day because she would perform the *Zār*, and I was most anxious to witness it. I had never seen it, though I had heard about it. When I entered the place I found a wide court spread with a large [352] carpet, and along its sides rugs thrown upon the ground, so that no part was above the other. This was out of respect for the *Kūdīyāt*, who do not like to sit on couches, nor may anyone sit above them. This is done out of obedience to "Religion," seeing that their belief is that what they do is in accordance with the text of the Divine Law, which just shows [771] the ignorance of these women and their not studying the facts, [562] for they know nothing of their Religion except the names of Saints like *Bedawī*, *Rifā'ī*, *Bayūmī*, *Mutawellī*, and other such names.[1] So if one of them has the least ailment, the *Kūdīya* 755
makes her imagine that *Sīdī Bedawī* or some other will come to 776
her. 756 And everyone knows how much the imagination influences the feelings. So the women seek "blessing" from her, and come to her from all sides, reckoning the honouring of her one of the chief requirements of religion, because there dwells in her body the pure *Sīdī Bedawī*, or *Sh̲aik̲h̲ Muḥammad*, or

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[1] [*Bedawī* is the celebrated saint of Ṭanṭā, in the Delta; *Rifā'ī* is buried in Cairo near the Citadel. *Bayūmī* is buried at Huseiniya near 'Abbāsiya, Cairo; *Mutawellī* is the famous *Ḳuṭb* (or "*Pole*") of the *Ṣūfīs* and is supposed to manifest his presence behind the *Bāb al-Zuwaila* in Cairo. Tr.]

755 some other of the saints. All this is the result of ignorance
776 arising from girls not being educated.

756 [Description of the *Zār*.]

" First of all the *Kūdīya* arose and placed a chair in the
755 middle of the room and made our hostess, the mistress of the
787 house, sit on it. She next produced [p. 75] two hens and a
782 cock. She tied the legs of the hens together, placed the cock
on her head and the two hens on her shoulders, and began
reciting the appointed rigmarole and declaiming verses, whilst
the birds for fear of her were screaming and shrieking until
the place shook, and all the ladies were stroking their faces
and saying : ' Please, oh, Lords ! Help, oh, people of Allah !
Pity, oh, my Lords ! ' whilst she was reciting and holding in
her hand the drum which is called the *bandīr* in the parlance
of the *Ṣūfīs* [lit. the people of the way]. Then she began
pounding upon it and uttering incantations after that fashion,
until when she ceased she took down the cock and the hens,
and went out to the courtyard of the house, and brought in a
ram, one of the best, and ordered it to be slaughtered. When
it was stabbed she brought forth a dish and caught the blood
in it, and ordered the lady to drink some of that blood, and
anoint her limbs with it, which she did. We were all looking
at what might make one's flesh creep. For we know that blood
[784] is forbidden, as much as the dead, or the flesh of the pig.
[539] When they were finished with these shocking actions, they
surrounded her, having drums, and cymbals (*ṣunūg*) in their
hands, and brought her in with, I fancy, greater ceremony
than she had at her wedding, smeared as she was with blood
in place of the wedding ornaments, until she sat in front of the
Kūdīya and her followers. All sat in their places, and the
ladies who were invited also sat down. The assembly composed
itself and coffee was brought in, and they rested for half an
hour. Then they took up their drums and began beating
furiously with bewildering incantation. Meanwhile the lady
was kneeling in front of the drummers with her head upside
down [p. 76] on the ground till one of them came with a bundle
of clothes consisting of a change of men's clothing, namely, an
[292] *'abā'a* [or cloak] embroidered with gold and silver thread in
the best style. They opened it and brought out a robe of

Indian silk, its ends wrought with silver, a *ṭarbūsh* crowned 755
with pearls, and added to that a sword and dagger both 787
covered with silver. She girt herself with the sword and took 782
the dagger in her hand and bowed herself in the midst of that 892
august assembly, the instruments playing the while. Then she trembled and said: 'Peace be upon you.' They said, 'Welcome. Who are you?' She replied, 'I am the Shaikh 'Abd al-Salām.' So they played for her in the mode usual for the Shaikh afore-mentioned.

"Then she danced a merry, pleasing dance, until when the round was finished, the leader arose and massaged her. With that the Shaikh went his way. Thereat his wife, whose name is Sitt Ruḳḳaya, appeared and entered into the body of the woman, and said: 'Peace be upon you, ladies,' in a high tone with traces of affectation in it. Then she saluted the whole company, and demanded clothes and ornaments. They brought her seven changes of silk, each one a different colour, and each one embroidered with gold and silver thread, and upon every garment a piece of gauze (*burunguk*) of the same colour. They call it the head-veil (*Ṭarḥa*). It has old gold charms on its edges. They also presented her with gold or silver worked necklaces, bracelets, anklets, collars, armbands, and rings—much larger than the usual rings—and veils, and other things as well. Then they beat for her according to the seven modes, and with each mode she put on a different dress and variety of ornaments. And in the meantime there arose [p. 77] some of those, who had been invited, and danced with her. All their fine clothing was not inferior to what we have described; that of the beggar women (*faḳīrāt*) being of silver. If the value of what was in that place had been counted it would have exceeded seven hundred guineas in ornaments and jewels, etc.

"When they had finished that, the lady who was the wife 755
of 'Abd al-Salām went off, after saying good-bye to the company. 787
Then in came the little son of Shaikh 'Abd al-Salām, although 782
in the bodily form of the woman. Then her circumstances altered and she returned to the state of childhood, and sat upon the ground playing like a child, and speaking like a child and lisping. But the artifice was evident. They played

755 for her the usual mode, and she was jumping about like a child
789 until it was finished. Then the spirit went out of her to his
752 mother. After him came in the slave whose name is Murgān[1]
and began speaking in the jargon of slaves, and dancing according to his customary mode. He at length went away and the
slave-woman, his spouse [the Sitt Rīḥāna], came in and adorned
herself, and stood in the midst of the hall, and screamed in a
frightsome manner, and said, 'I will not cook save with the
silver spoon (*maghrifa*) nor will I content myself with other
than the silver roller (*gandara*). And if you do not bring them
to me, I will blind her and cast upon her a disease, and will
753 not let her rise up from the earth.' Then all the ladies rose
from every side and surrounded her, each one kissing her
hands, and coaxing her to forgive them, which only made her
more refractory and terrifying until the chief *Kūdīya* rose and
made her agree to come again the following week.

[p. 78.] " At this point I asked one of the ladies at my side, 'What is this body that contains this family even to the slaves and handmaidens; and where were they formerly? And why were the man and his wife and child not present together, and the slaves standing to wait on them?' When the lady heard what I said, she stared at me in astonishment, and said, 'Be quiet, lest the Lords be angry. (Pardon, oh, my Lords!)' Then I said, 'I did not mean that. I only wanted information. Why does she not do like the rest and return whence she came?' She said, 'The devotee worked for them the necessary things except for this Lady Rīḥāna. She did nothing for her, so the latter is very angry. (Allah be praised, oh, my Lady Rīḥāna.)'

" Afterwards food was brought to which the mistress of the *Zār* very cordially and politely invited the guests, after which they all departed pleased and grateful."

755 " Healing " by means of the *Zār*[2] acquired some fame when

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[1] [This is the celebrated servant of the Jinn. The name means " coral."]

[2] [The nearest analogy to it is the Black Mass in Christendom or perhaps Voodooism. For further information consult P. Kahle: *Zār-Beschwörungen in Egypten* (in *Der Islam*, 3, 1912, pp. 1–41; 189–190; 318); also the *Moslem World*, 1913, pp. 275–289. In 1931 at the Exhibition of Modern Art in Cairo, there was on view an interesting oil painting by an Egyptian lady artist depicting part of the Zār ceremony. Tr.]

it was taken up by a society in Europe. But the truth is 755
clear that those who thus imitated the " old wives " of Egypt
were only seeking after some new and wonderful thing so that
people might make a fuss about them. They were denounced
by the scientific world of Europe, until they desisted from their
error.

XXXVII

"THORN OF THE WIND" SHŌKAT-AL-RĪḤ

THIS is a name used generally in the villages for decay 164
(caries) of the bones of the phalanges of the foot or hand, and
the accompaniment of this decay with violent inflammation
and great swelling. Many people in Buḥaira (Province) have 752
become famous for " curing " it, the best known of them being
the Shaikh 'Abd al-Ḥamīd. He has two " treatments " for
this, one, old, namely, that the finger of the patient should be
burnt with a circular cauterization ; the other, new, namely,
that the sinews of the muscles should be cut and rooted out
along with a part of the substance of the fingers. It is asserted
that this latter " method " makes a more radical cure than the
former because it is in agreement with modern science. The
harm is not confined, however, to the cutting and rooting out
of the sinews, but his recommendation to the patient not to
wash his wound with water [p. 80] saying that water is " the [753]
poison of wounds."

Some people employ a poultice of doves' dung, as I saw last 757
year, for a youth presented himself to me during my stay in
the provinces, and on examination I found the nail-phalanx
necrotic. So I extracted it and he was well after a few days,
though he had remained for sixty days before having it out,
enduring in it all kinds of torment.

FOLK MEDICINE IN MODERN EGYPT

XXXVIII

SKIN DISEASES AND SNAKE-CHARMERS

169 753 755 [756] THE common people think that *impetigo* or skin-disease (*karfa*) originates from the fact that the viper blows its poison into the body. For that reason those afflicted betake themselves to the snake-charmers [Rifā'ī Dervishes] and the viper-enchanters [Sa'danī Dervishes].[1] As for the latter, they are the lowest roughs who claim that they have complete authority over serpents and vipers. So they charm by means of oil, that is, they spit into it, and anoint the patient with this oil for the space of three days. Then he is "cured." And it is [p. 81] a vain assertion and worthless belief because scientific and practical experiments prove that the poison of these reptiles does not cause harm except when it touches the blood. The savant Bouchard swallowed capsules containing large quantities of it. They were very nourishing. It is mentioned that the degree of their nourishment was like that of the white of eggs.

757 And if we see the oil of the charmers sometimes benefiting in the case of *karfa*, that is only because this disease, like some skin diseases, demands for its successful treatment extreme caution against atmospheric injuries, that is, the influence of the outside air. When oil is smeared on, the layer of smearing forms a sort of barrier between them. So no wonder the patient is cured and relieved from the fetter of the disease. For the oil in this case produces softening in the crusts of the skin-disease, then they fall off of themselves. And it is not, as the *Sa'danī* and other triflers assert that this results from their control over serpents. Because if they were speaking the truth, why do they let the serpents injure people at all, and harm mankind with their ill-doing?

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[1] [See article by translator on *The Gypsies of Modern Egypt* in the *Moslem World*, July, 1933, p. 289.]

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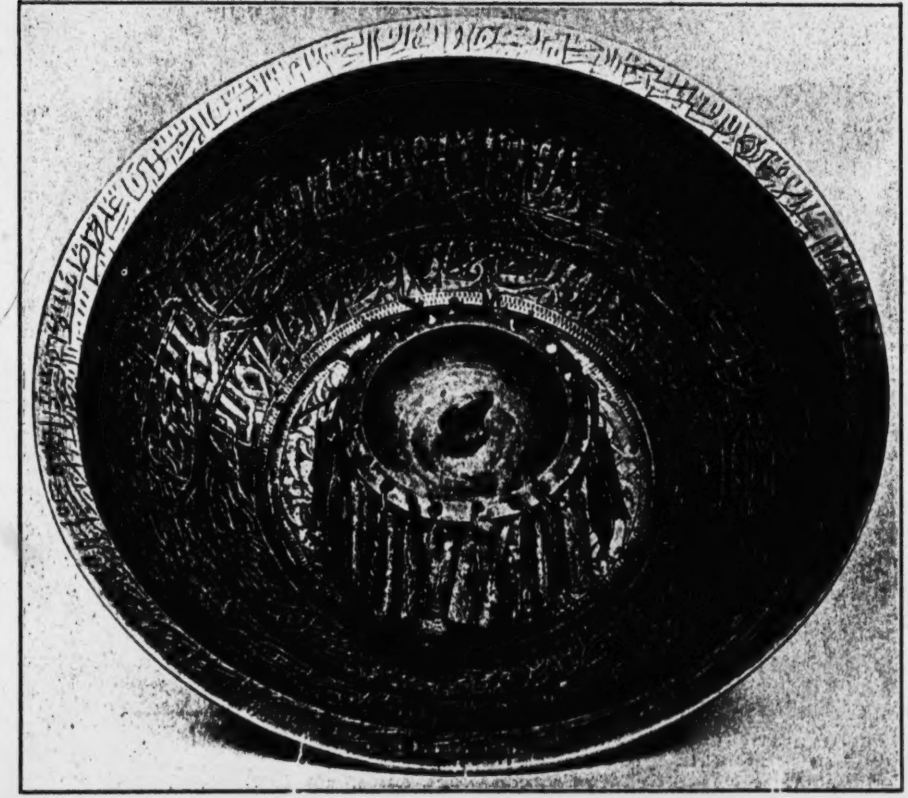

THE "FEAR" CUP (Ṭâsat-al-Tarba)

Facing p. 69]

FOLK MEDICINE IN MODERN EGYPT

XXXIX

[p. 82.] THE "FEAR" CUP (ṬĀSAT-AL-TARBA)

THEY say that if there befall a man what throws into his 164
heart nervousness and terror, there is no escape from his being 153
struck either, with venereal disease [*zuhrī*] (there is no need to
expose the lies of these folk, since it is generally accepted that
venereal disease is contagious and never arises from imagination), or, *yaraḳān* (" jaundice ") (which they use generally as a
name for nervous diseases). And the " cure " for both of 755
these afflictions is that water should be placed in the " *Fear*" 789
Cup.[1] It is a vessel of brass engraved with the figures of birds [915]
or inscribed with obscure writings, and after it is exposed to
the dew by night, the invalid drinks it and is " cured."

One curious thing is that there is found suspended round the border of the cup forty pieces of brass engraved like the foregoing, and when one of these pieces is lost, there is lost with it the benefit which was to be expected from the taking of the water placed in the cup. I have asked many people about this folly and they have replied : " We found our ancestors doing this and we are driven to do likewise."

The real cause of the disease. It is now established that 753
venereal disease is a disease that is contagious, and not produced of itself, but by inheritance from forebears, or the result of secret contact. So that this false opinion is invalidated.

But these influences are the result of fear and perhaps they 000

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[1] [The following is a rough description of this type of medicine bowl from one in the possession of the translator (plate 3). The dimensions of the bowl are 7½ ins. in diameter and fully 2 ins. in height. The inner cup is 2½ ins. in diameter and 1½ in. in height. Round the rim of the inner cup are twenty little holes, from which are suspended forty keys, two from each hole. Each
key bears an inscription on each side. These are not easily decipherable, but [915]
appear to be some of the *Asmā' al-ḥusnā*, or *most beautiful names of Allah*. A common one is *Ghafūr* (the forgiver). By loosening the central screw the inner cup with its keys may be turned round to any part of the bowl. The inscriptions are too long to translate here. Besides containing well-known passages *from the Koran*, there are likewise pious exclamations and invocations of the archangels, such as, oh Gabriel ! (*Yā Gibr'īl*), oh Michael ! (*Yā Mīkā'īl*) oh 'Azra'īl, etc. On the extreme edge of the bowl there are what appear to be numbers of magical import. A slightly different example is illustrated by Zwemer in his *Influence of Animism on Islam*, p. 180. Tr.]

753 But these influences are the result of fear and perhaps they
152 cause other diseases of a nervous character which are feared
861 especially by the young. And since that is only the result of
frightening children with the dark, and with Jinn and the bogey
man[1] and other [p. 83] absurdities such as ignorant mothers
tell to their children, frightening and terrifying them, the cure
for the resultant ills is to eradicate the ignorance of the mothers
[562] by education, a thing which is still considered a sin in the
East.

XL

INCENSING (TABKHĪRA)

754 " And for Syphilis (*tashwīsh*) they ' prescribed ' incensing,
Which an " old wife " among them of the tribe of Basūs
prepares.
She recites over it the [Koranic] section of *Iblīs* [=the Devil]
As if Death sent her to go to and fro.
How much money was given for its fabrication ?
How many souls have been disgusted by its fumigation ?
And does their ' incensing ' with vermilion (*zungafr*)
Cure a sick person, when there is decay in the skeleton ? "

Some of the " old wives " in the provinces were famed in past ages for their " cure " of venereal disease by " incensing." It is an ancient practice in the villages until to-day it has attained to such a degree of imagination that the villagers apply the censer (*mabkhara*) to every serious disease, be it V.D. or not.

I witnessed that myself once. An " old wife " came to " incense " a man who had been sick for a long time, and his relatives were bewildered about his disease (because they would
not go to a physician) and in fact, he was suffering from
[164] retention of urine due to stone. The patient died with the assistance of the " incensing " of the " doctress."

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[1] [Literally, the man with (or the father of) the skinned leg (*Abū rigl maslūkha*). This bogey corresponds to our Devil on Two Sticks (= Diable Boiteu = Asmodeus, Prince of Demons). See my article in *Folk-Lore*, vol. xxxviii, 4 (Dec., 1927), p. 377. Tr.]

The manner of it is this : The " old wife " orders the windows 757
of the sick room to be closed first of all. Next she orders him not to eat anything but thin bread and honey during the space of ten days. On the eleventh day a large fire is kindled in the sick room [p. 84] and the " old wife " places on it her incense [218]
(which consists of pieces of sulphate of natural mercury) that is, cinnabar [*zungafr*, or sulphuret of mercury]. There goes up a thick vapour which fills the emptiness of the room. Then the " old wife " leaves her patient and goes out quickly that his punishment may be endured in solitude, since he inhales the quick poison of the fumes of the quicksilver flying about. I was informed by a trustworthy person that one patient died after two hours of the " fumigating," though, before it, he was fairly well, his illness not being dangerous or fatal. This mistake is common in all the districts of Egypt. And no matter how the " old wife's " methods or herbs may vary, they do not produce the desired effect nor any part of it, unless indeed the object of destruction. It is suitable, in the most expeditious manner, for that.

XLI

'ISHBA

As some obtain a " cure " by incense, others, both men and 218
women, dispense with medicine by means of '*ishba* (sarsaparilla), 757
which is too well-known to be named here, even children know it by heart, for they think that in it is a divine secret opposed to syphilis. But they are wrong, seeing that is has no use at all to-day as far as we know. Some people reckon it itself and sassafras, and guaiacum [lit. " wood of the prophets "] to be of the herbs causing sweat, but in my opinion, tea is better than any of them.

It is quite certain that the bulk of the *fellāḥīn* in these days know the truth of what we have said, because of its inefficacy, and that they have turned aside from it. Nowadays they know

278
757 another thing; you will see them coming to the cities and asking in hospitals or pharmacies for it [p. 85] by the name of *yadūr*, meaning potassium iodide. Yes, they are right as to its being beneficial, but not in all attacks of syphilis, seeing that it is proved that it is not the least use in the first two attacks. (And in particular they do not know syphilis from anything else, for they are ignorant of the diagnosis of the disease and consequently miss the cure.)

We have previously hinted at a remedy for syphilis. But in general there is no escape from consulting a physician. The patient who fears for his family, or the family who fear for him, should hasten to get away from the disease, since it is contagious.

XLII

" MIXING " (MADHAḲ)

164 *Madhaḳ* literally means " mixing."[1]

(And in truth they are *mixed* when they err in its treatment.) It is [a name] applied in the villages to a kind of muscular swelling (or rheumatism) which strikes the muscle under the shoulder-blade, and the muscle below the spine sometimes.
755 And they " prescribe " for him who is smitten with it, that he should lean against the door of a room facing the East, with his feet above and his head below, and meeting the ground with his palms so that the weight of his body will be upon them. And he must have filled his mouth with water, and must remain in this position about ten minutes at least, until he becomes giddy (from congestion of the brain) and throws himself to the ground. The harm of this " method " is obvious and useless [p. 86] except to make those who do it like monkeys. *Perhaps the patient overturns on to his back or falls upon his pia mater* [*Arabice* (أم راس) " mother of the head "], and there receives the reward of his act, or the result of his folly and his inability to imitate others.

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[1] [This " mixing " or ambiguity cannot be translated.]

FOLK MEDICINE IN MODERN EGYPT

XLIII

THE HORN OF THE RHINOCEROS AND POISONS

ALL internal diseases for which the "old wife" is not 278
enabled to perfect a trick to impose on the intellects of the 755
people of the provinces, she attributes in her diagnosis to *Sukwa* [see below]. She says to the patient: "Oh, my son, you have *Sukwa* and nothing will be of any avail except the horn of the rhinoceros, which must be placed in a china vessel and exposed to the dew all night and drunk upon an empty stomach in the morning."

Now the "horn of the rhinoceros" (*karn al-khartīt*) consists 278
of pieces of the horns of cows or of buffaloes. Pilgrims or merchants from the Sudan bring them and spin the tale how that they are the antidote (*tiriāk*) for poisons. Whereas even if they were rhinoceros horns, as they assert, there are no special beneficial qualities in them at all, as far as we know. But it is well known that the volatile salts of the English are extracted from the horns of the hart, or [p. 87] mountain buck, but that is not the rhinoceros. Whereas if we imagined, as they do, that these two are one and the same, they would not have brought a conclusive proof, since on their putting the horn in water the salt in it does not melt so as to be of benefit. But what we do know is that the volatile salts of the English are no good in counteracting poisons (except alcoholic poisoning or intoxication).

It is well-known that the word *Sukwa* is applied generally to 169
pulmonary consumption accompanied by loss of blood on 757
coughing. The patient must be well-fed, and guarded as 753
much as possible from cold. He must leave the place where he caught it for dry warm places, and keep away from crowds and not neglect moderate exercise. And let his people guard against allowing him to spit upon articles or on the ground (For if they knew that the poison that the "old wife" shuns is expectorated with the saliva, and that healthy people breathe it and fall into the clutches of Death, they would beware of the evil consequences. So let them know that it is one of the most

164 violent of contagious diseases and the hardest to cure). There-
757 fore let them have him spit into a handkerchief or a piece of
753 linen, which is then dipped in tar and afterwards burned.

His relatives should call in a doctor to visit him. It is well
757 known that menfolk do not reckon themselves ill unless they
164 are confined to their rooms and unable to stir out of doors, that
is, when the illness has become chronic and incurable. Whereas if it had been receiving attention it would not have been thus, except after a very long time, and at the beginning it would have been possible to repel it with ease. Frequently we have seen people suffering from pulmonary consumption, and in spite of that [p. 88] the answer of one of them to us when we asked him about his disease, was: "Allah forbid, I am not diseased." But before long we see the disease contradicting him, and he is confined to his house. And most of them are fated to die of these diseases for this reason.

757 It is encumbent on those who are consumptive to attend
744 to the disease at the outset. But I fancy them saying, "And
where can we find a doctor to consult every time; the cities are distant, and perhaps we go to consult a doctor and can't find him." I say, it is an easy matter. If the people of the villages desire to have a special doctor for themselves to cure them gratis, without their going to him, and to be at their command, they have only to take the trouble to ask him from the Government on condition that each one of them pays one millième per month (as His Excellency 'Alī Mubārak Pāshā reckoned) and as we demonstrated more than once in the well-known newspaper *al-Mu'ayyad.*[1]

XLIV

PAIN OF THE SHIḲḲA

164 THIS is generally applied to diseases of the spinal marrow
and colic of the stomach and kidneys. They "prescribe" for
755 759 the sick that two men should carry him by the head and feet

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[1] [See Hartmann: *op. cit. index.*]

and place him on the back of a she-ass having its feet tied, so 755
that the back of the sick should coincide with the back of the 757
ass, and one of the "doctors" beats her while the other holds the head of the patient. Then the she-ass jumps violently. It is said that there is mighty healing in her. One of the "sagacious ones" enlarged upon the success of it in his case once. When I asked him concerning the diagnosis of his disease at that time, I knew that a kidney-stone had stopped in his *Ḥālib* [p. 89] (i.e. the canal that conducts the urine from the kidneys into the urinary bladder) so the leaping of the ass helped its rolling and slipping.

But the leaping of the ass is no use in colic of the stomach or of the colon, or inflammation of the spinal marrow.

XLV

TONICS FOR THE VENEREAL FACULTY

THE seeds which are matrimonial tonics and incitements to 832
coition and whose secrets they spread abroad in cities, and 278
which many simpletons and rich people who pay their prices at recognized rates, rush to purchase from them, are all aids to the destruction of health, hastening on ruin. They are not of the least use for the object aimed at by these foolish people, nay, the result is the opposite of that, as those, who serve Science by experience assert (in spite of their being deceived at first by errors). And we do not know that true Materia Medica mentions drugs which prolong the time of propagation or strengthen the veneral faculty, unless some false opinions of certain Westerners which are considered like the opinions of "quacks" in our country.

They have said that the injection of a solution of the testicles of a fox and the Indian pig is advantageous, but experience contradicts this.

[p. 91.] And they may believe that the dye of Spanish flies[1]

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[1] [*lit.* Indian flies.]

832 278 is sure of success, but this success does not materialize unless at the moment when the person is on the brink of the grave, and in the stages of poisoning for which they are no effectual remedies.

XLVI

THE "BEAD" OF THE COW (KHARZAT-AL-BAKARA)

278 825 SOME women assert, and butchers agree with them, that there is in the neck or bellies of some cattle a piece of suet which has a wonderful property of producing fat in emaciated women, and so they go to extremes to obtain it. The butchers vie with one another in enhancing its price until on occasion it has reached ten guineas.

832 We cannot imagine what idea drove the ladies to run after this goal, for beauty does not call for size and fatness. It is enough for a woman that she be healthy and of good deportment. It is all one to her husband whether she be bursting with fat or slender-waisted. The truth is, health is not gained by fatness, but fat is generally one of the accompaniments of health.

But if we grant that health follows fat, who will prove that the "bead" of the cow, which has acquired this wonderful fame, has the least effect ? I understand that Kaufmann the
114 278 German, goes so far as to say that the "bead" of the cow, famous [p. 92] among the women of Cairo, is nothing but the chyme[1] of cattle.

And if his investigation of this subject is barren of scientific results, nevertheless perhaps it enables us to explain this singular belief.

As for the "old wives" of Egypt, they do not order lean women anything else but this.

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[1] [The Arabic text has *timûs*, for which I read *kimûs* (chyme). I am unable to verify the opinion of Kaufmann. Tr.]

FOLK MEDICINE IN MODERN EGYPT

XLVII

MUFATTĀḲA[1]

The "old wives" make this out of a collection of materials 278 whose number to their statement, reaches forty kinds, the bulk 757 of it of oily fruits. The fat of black beetles is reported to be necessary to the completion of its ingredients. It appears from its composition that it is hard to digest and of an injurious nature. It causes turbidness of digestion and diarrhœa. So it is more harmful than the "bead" of the cow [see above]. But the "old wives" have other compounds besides this, such as "the Seven grains" (سبع حبوب) [see illustration in Miss Blackman, op. cit. p. 79] and "orange jelly" (مطبوخ النارنج).

XLVIII

ECZEMA (ṢAFRA)

This is a name used generally in the provinces for many 164 skin diseases which are a sort of eczema (Ḳūb), and especially for the disease called psoriasis. (I mean the "pearly" variety, because it has scabs shining like mother of pearl). Those afflicted with this disease go to Shaikh Farag Abū 759 Maḥmūd of Munāshela in the district of Shubrakhīt in the Province of Buḥaira. He cauterizes them upon the metatarsus of their feet opposite the tops of the three last toes, 757 and orders them not to go near water for forty days. The strange thing is that this condition does not suit the Fellāḥ whose food comes from sowing [p. 93] especially while he is barefooted. Then how should he not be wet when he is continually immersed?

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[1] [This is a kind of sweetmeat or *ḥalāwa*, made of molasses. I had the opportunity given me of tasting it once. If its dark oily appearance does not repel, its taste does. I can understand now after seeing its colour why the rumour goes that it is made from the flesh of black beetles, as the author states. Tr.] [263]

757 Only, if the disease be concealed some days of the year, as happens in the winter season usually, the " physician " goes off boasting of his cure, charging the patients to take care still more, imposing upon them many hard conditions, so that he has a thousand excuses when the disease reappears.

XLIX

ENVY (ḤASAD)

754 " When the envier casts his evil eye,
152 Bring fire and *s̲h̲abb*, together with *fāsūk̲h̲* and *jāwī*,[1]
828 And if the Beldame of the tribe is present,
She will say: ' Incensing is most beneficial in curing.' "

Doctors have tried to account for envy, and their latest explanation is that it is due to the electric magnetism which exists in varying quantity in all things. In inorganic bodies it is the gravitational force, in plants it is the life principle. In human beings this electricity is found in a power which differs in quantity and quality. The former is known; the latter, on the other hand, is of two kinds, either beneficial or pernicious.

When the former kind is found in a person it makes him well disposed in wordly affairs. You see him attracting favours, either by his appearance or by the elegance of his address, or the beauty of his manners in society. On account of this, love of appearance is engendered, or enthusiasm for the discourse of a speaker, and there is destined for its owner the approval of men according to his business, or trade, or manner of life. But when the latter kind is found in a person it makes him become artful in subjects of evil report. You see him either a thief or a practicer of the lowest crafts, or addicted to covetousness and vengeance, if it is in his power to do so. And by means of whatever amount of this evil power is given to him he imposes on simpletons by various 754 tricks until he steals whatever they possess. You even see 152 him in a court of justice looking innocent and pitied by men 828 just because of his influence over them.

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[1] [These substances are explained *infra*. Tr.]

The evil magnetic electricity, which we name *envy*, directs itself by way of man's senses. And as it effects the sense of sight, so also sometimes touch, smell and hearing.

One of my acquaintances said to me that the *Faḳīh*[1] of their 754 village was "envying" children by staring at them, and whenever the envier directed his gaze upon the envied one in the moment of excitement his poison affected that current and weakened the life movement in animals and plants, and they were wasted and lost. And in proportion to the power of the envier in overcoming the power of the envied, so is the strength or weakness of the danger, and there results a slight or a severe illness, or death, or the snapping of trees, or the destruction of lofty palaces.

A reliable person has related that there was a man, named al-Safti, in the village of Dafrawi in the Province of Buhaira, twenty years ago, who was an evil-doer. The people of that district knew this. One of his atrocities was that when he was sitting with a company of evil companions, one day, in front of his house, there passed by him a number of Gypsies [563] (*Ghagar*) driving camels to market. He bargained with them for a camel, but they did not accept the price which it was [437] worth to them. Then one of his companions said to him, "Woe to thee, O Ṣaftī! Allow us to eat of its flesh just now!" So he shook his head (in assent) and overtook the merchants and seized the camel's head-rope, and said, while he was intently looking at it, "Oh, you fat camel!" [p. 96.] Then the narrator swears that the camel did not move from its place but fell to the ground, and they slaughtered it. But (he says) the strange fact was that its flesh was tasteless and blueish in colour.

A friend told me that two men skilled in envy (*ḥasad*) and renowned for it were feared by the people. One day one of these two went to visit his friend (the other envier) and found [241] him ploughing the land with two large oxen. So he looked

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[1] [See footnote above, p. 40.]

754 at them an instant. A second later one of the bulls was
241 choked and the plough broken. Then al-Sa'dāwī [this was his
name] called to him, " Woe to you, O Jafīla! Could you not
find someone else to afflict to-day with the blade of your envy?
754 Off with you, for I will retaliate upon you." He did not
postpone his threat long, for the fire of envy enraged him. In
the evening he went to the enclosure of his fellow " craftsman,"
but did not find him there. Instead he found a bull which he
stared at with his eyes. Instantly the bull fell down, and al-Sa'dāwī thereupon withdrew. When Jafīla arrived and his
people told him about it, he asked them, " Was al-Sa'dāwī
present?" Consider these two fools!

And because of the prevalence of this matter in the provinces
[753] you can see many illnesses, even wide-spread fevers, ascribed
to " Envy." To " cure " this the " old wife " betakes herself
754 to charm the patient, and kindles a fire on which she throws
755 pieces of *shabb* (one of the compounds of Alumina) and *fasūkh*
(sweet-smelling pine-resin) or *jāwī*.[1] Then when the *shabb*
melts upon the fire it evaporates and some of the vapours
become polluted with its elements and assume various forms.
[789] The " old wife " says that they are the representation of a
woman or a man, according to her fabrications. [A fuller
account than this is given by Lane in his *Modern Egyptians*,
chapter XI, page 257 (Everyman Edition). Tr.]

[p. 97.] (Cases in point). The " old wife " once fumigated a young man. When she had blown up the alum (*shabb*) she pointed to it as the image of a woman whose name she mentioned, and who was well-known in their village for " envy." Thereafter she took a pin and stabbed it into the image saying, " May God put out her eye! "

754 By a strange happening the woman, noted for her envy,
753 came to the young man (who was a physician) complaining of
ophthalmia. Someone told her that the old " fumigating "
wife had stabbed a pin in the eye of the image and mentioned
her name. Then the silly woman imagined that the ophthalmia
had only arisen because of that, and went off to raise her plaint.
From her imaginings she created realities for which she began

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[1] [i.e. benzoin. The more correct name is *lubān jāwī*, i.e. Javanese frankincense. Tr.]

claiming payment. Had it been in the past centuries, people 754
would have retaliated on the "old wife." (May Allah wage 753
war upon Ignorance !)

To protect camels from "envy," an old shoe is hung upon 751
its temple, but I do not know the reason for this. 825

On the breast of a horse the tooth of a hyena is hung. This 754
old absurdity is the custom current amongst horse-fanciers, of
bedecking their steeds with this tooth which they reckon the
greatest of ornaments.

On a donkey a wolf's tooth is hung.

Children have put in their hair a piece of *fāsūkh* or *jāwī*, and they hang upon their necks pieces of the bones of the eagle, or of any animal of prey, along with some shells.

It happens sometimes on a day that a milch cow refuses its
milk because of some disease or other cause. So the "old
wife" announces [p. 98] to them that it is "envied" and
orders the placing of its halter in a forsaken grave until the 789
cow gives milk.

As for our discourse on envy, if we suppose it to be true, then 753
what happens daily in the provinces is not of that nature. On
the contrary, they are symptoms of various diseases such as
we have previously diagnosed. In most cases they are marsh
fevers which arise from the water-courses and swamps surrounding
the villages, and which, in the time of ploughing,
are very common, especially after irrigation and the ploughing
of the wheat and clover land, owing to the great putrefaction
of the vegetable refuse on the land.

As for getting rid of swamps, that is a matter entrusted to the intelligent members of the community who apprehend the destruction of their own health and that of their children. In ploughing it is necessary for ploughmen to take a good square meal before undertaking the work, and to protect their heads from the influence of the sun.

FOLK MEDICINE IN MODERN EGYPT

L

"CURERS OF THE POOR AND DIVINERS OF TREASURES"

781 791 "For illness of the body, sometimes healing is to be hoped for,
But the illness of poverty is indeed difficult.
What is the thought of the ignorant when they lose
Their wits ? When the quack roams about,
And says, Divination (*jafr*) tells me of treasure.
So the person who gives money will find happiness.
The glory of incense is nothing but a means
By which the artful fashions the impossible."

791 An Arabic proverb tells us : "In corners are hidden things" (*fī zawāyā khābāyā*). I do not seek there, however, for hidden treasures as people assert. I only indicate that anyone who tests mankind in regard to their characteristics and customs and their several degrees of wealth and poverty will have revealed to him many unknown matters, and there will be solved for him many mysteries and obscurities. And of these no enigma is more difficult of solution amongst the common people than "the Extraction of Treasures." For they think that the magicians of the [p. 99] Ancient Egyptians and Romans used to bury their possessions in the ground under the guardianship of the Jinn "Helpers" who were forced to defend them by the power of names. So, whoever knows these names and enchantments is undoubtedly the most fortunate man of his day and generation. Thus have people inherited this error and made it their stock in trade. There is no district in the provinces without a company of these cheats who conceal this secret for the sake of obtaining power by it in the regions which they visit, until their glance chances upon a group of simple fools whom they treat at first as friends. After the (so-called) friendship has been manifested, the "Revealer of Treasures" suggests to certain of these ignoramuses that they should offer him some cash in order that he may buy incense with it for revealing such and such a treasure in such a village.

He demonstrates that in proportion to the increase in the amount of this cash there will be an increase in the gold of the treasure. So the poor ignoramus goes off to his dwelling to fulfil his injunctions, or rather facilitate his road to riches. Sometimes he has not a dime in his house, so he borrows a sum from Zaid or 'Amr for the space of a week (to be paid back from the "treasure"). Perhaps he sells his wife's ornaments without her knowledge. Then the impostor pockets the cash and goes off like 'Anzī the gatherer.[1] Yet if these fools had any insight they would see the state of the "Revealer of Treasures," his narrowness of life, his degradation and contemptibleness. And if it were in his power to do what he claims, he would be rich without their petty cash.

But this error is not amongst Orientals only, but amongst Westerners as well.

One of them told me that the owner of a European café said to him: "A fellow countryman of mine entered my café one day. He appeared from his dress to be a Baron or a Count. My opinion was substantiated straightway, for, after he drank [p. 100] a cup of coffee, he gave me a pound and went off without waiting for the change. It seemed to me that he would return. But when he did return he did not take the change, nay, he gave me another pound on the second and third day, and so on until my spirit became madly enamoured of this Lord of Gold, and I began to make a friendly compact with him. After a time, when he was intimate with me, I asked him as a friend, 'Why do you supply me with these gifts, the like of which we do not hear of, even from European Dukes?' He answered me, 'Do not ask the reason, for the matter is wonderful.' Then I began imploring him, so he promised to explain that story to me. On the next day he said to me: 'My friend, every day I extract a frightful quantity of gold, because Allah inspired me with the method. By it one *dīnār* becomes two, so why should I be stingy with you a fellow countryman, seeing that you are poor?' So I asked him to take twenty *dīnārs* (which I had made in the past few days) so that he should return them as forty. He came back next day and handed me forty pounds, and told me that

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[1] [A person in proverbial lore who went off and never returned. Tr.]

791 he had made up his mind to travel on the morrow to the Nile Valley. Then my heart was aflutter at this news, and I begged him to delay his journey until after the morrow, until I had given him my cash to double. He demurred a little, then after my much pleading, he consented at last. So I handed him all my wealth, the profits of fifteen years, four hundred pounds. He took it and disappeared, and did not return from that time."

LI

THE SHE-MULE OF THE THRONE OR OF THE TENTH (BAGHLAT-AL-'ARSH AU AL-'ASHR)

776 789 THERE is nothing more extraordinary than this nonsense. They say that on the night of the twenty-seventh of the month Rajab, or according to others on the night of the *tenth* of the month Muḥarram,[1] as can be gathered from its name, there is to be seen a black she-mule which goes round all the cultivated districts, with a saddle-bag full of gold on her back, and, above the saddle-bag, the head [p. 101] of a slave severed from its trunk. They say that whoever chances upon her, must take what goods are in the saddle-bag and place instead barley for the mule. For this reason the silly ones amongst the country folk spend all their nights awake on the look out for the footprints of the she-mule.

An old man of advanced age (one of those who still trust in this error but who told his story after the manner of a jest) said to me: I was sitting along with three of my companions at the house of a friend of ours in the middle of the road, on the night appointed for the passing of the mule. (It is said that she passes along the best path.) We determined upon spending the whole night in watching. When we were in the last third

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805 796 785 [1] [The tenth day of al-Muḥarram, the first month of the Moslem year, has a sacred significance amongst the faithful. It is the *'Āshûrâ*, or voluntary fast day observed by the *sunnis*, or orthodox Moslems, while on the same day the *shî'as*, or sectarians of Islam, commemorate the fatal conflict at Kerbela, when the Prophet's grandson Ḥusain was killed (in A.D. 680).]

of the night and drowsiness was on the point of overcoming us, 776
behold we heard the trample of hoofs near the house, and it 789
suddenly occurred to us that it might be the mule. Our thought was not groundless for we actually encountered a black mule carrying a sack, and in the midst of the sack something projecting which we thought to be the severed head. So the master of the house led the mule to his home (after there was almost a conflict amongst us almost to the shedding of blood, each wanting to take the mule to his home in order to be " blessed " by it, or more likely in order that it might become accustomed to be present every year in his house. The result was that we came to an agreement, through fear of the arrival of some new shareholder who would diminish the shares). So when the mule graced the home of our host he hastened to offer an unstinted measure of wheat and barley as food for the noble animal. Meanwhile one of our friends was judging the sack from its outside appearance. He informed us that it was stuffed with gold dust and not cash. His proof of that was that he bit with his teeth on one of the corners of the sack and the gold dust yielded under his molars. Then the master of the house chid him and said : " Wilt thou scoff at the She-Mule of the Throne ? " Then that fellow answered him by grasping him by the throat, saying : " Wilt thou not be quiet after we have allowed you to have a private view of her noble self, that you seek to fall betwen her and me ! " [p. 102]. Both fell a-boxing until their voices rose and a company of the village night-watchmen assembled. Just then a black servant, a muleteer, appeared, and asked them to stop (saying) : " Did you not see a mule with a sack on its back ? It has strayed from the road and it is loaded with ashes (*ḳuṣrmull*)." Those present were astonished, and for a moment the earth almost shook under us. The people knew our ignorance. But as for the mule, it had finished eating what had been given to it, and the muleteer took it away, laughing at us.

FOLK MEDICINE IN MODERN EGYPT

LII

THE ALCHEMY OF GOLD

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820 THIS is one of the famous methods of curing poverty (or, if you like, of getting rid of the wealth of many). The hopes of a number of simpletons who try in vain to change iron into pure gold are dependent on this. They spend their time wasting mercury, until they merit the distrust of all true scientists. Some of them assert that Jābir ibn Ḥaiyān[1] was the first to
822 establish this method, but their assertion is false, and their imagining idle, since that excellent person never demonstrated that, nor occupied himself with it. Nay, he discovered a number of chemical substances[2] on which Westerners reared the bulk of their knowledge to-day. He used to liquify mercury and metals with acids in the hope of their becoming new substances beneficial to science and to the world. But the stagnant intellects of the ignoramuses who came after him, did not understand the meaning of his quest, so they said he occupied himself with the Alchemy of Gold.

And supposing he busied himself with the changing of metals into gold, Ibn Jābir is not to be blamed or found fault with, because science was young then, and the blame—the complete blame—is upon those who asserted such a thing after they deemed themselves the leaders of the Age of Civilization, and who were, time and again, declaring that they were the pillars of knowledge and science until temples were built for them and they were almost worshipped. By them I mean the men of the West [p. 103], for indeed Paracelsus,[3] in spite of his fame, lost a great part of his life in occupying himself with the transmutation of metals into gold.

Grant us these things, and tell us about him who repudiated in his philosophy the whole of science in its entirety and almost

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[1] [An Arab alchemist who is more famous in Europe under the name of Geber. Tr.]

[2] [He is credited, rightly or wrongly, with the discovery of Aqua Regia, sulphuric acid and nitric acid. Tr.]

[3] [The Arabic text gives BRZLBUS. I conjecture Paracelsus. Tr.]

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demolished the religion of his people, and affirmed that religions 822
were false. He was busily engaged in the other parts of his life with the particularities of names, and magic and astrology and the alchemy of gold. I mean by him the famous Voltaire. So why do we ignore these and say: "We Easterners were, E
and do not cease to be, in a manifest error?" In general we 822
find in Egypt many worthless persons, who have no work, addicted to the worship of some leaves which they deem to be treasures of great value (but their value is but madness, if they only knew it). You see them bringing numerous substances to produce the concoction, and keep on kindling fires under it until it all flies off in smoke. Then, when they do not find anything except a little dust inside the crucible, they think that they have made a mistake, so they begin the work again and again, and so on till their cash is lost, and their lives are like scattered dust. And while their money is coming to an end they are pouncing upon the ignorant with their imbecility, and they waste the remainder of their substance as the Treasure Diviners [see above] have done. This evil is found in cities more than in villages. I know many of the well-known families in Cairo, whose wealth was brought to an end through "the extraction of gold."

LIII

DECEIT UNDER THE NAME OF CIVILIZATION

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[p. 104.] We now come to the laxity and forgery that are 757
blended with the medicine of to-day, and what makes it fanciful 597
or seemingly so, just as we mentioned the description of the 759
men and women of the Past. Therefore, we say that there is no doubt that the sciences have advanced to-day since yesterday. Let us leave aside the distant past to be judged by the future. We do not know in which of the two science advanced more. A great number of intelligent people hold the opinion that time was when the sciences were more advanced than to-day.

The truth is that most of the works of mankind to-day

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proclaim that those holding this opinion are right without a mistake. Those who consider the doctors of the present generation, whose opinions clash and whose views disagree and whose drugs differ, are bewildered and know not which of them is right and which of them is mistaken. The person who considers the book which is printed in all languages as a commentary on the Elixir of Judenau (?) (جودنو) and sees that it cures all incurable illnesses in a short space, and who uses the " cure " for years and does not obtain the slightest advantage, becomes in his distress enraged against physic and physicians. Every invalid who turns the pages of this bulky book repeats what is written, viz., " By the use of six glasses of this Elixir the invalid will be cured of pulmonary consumption." Afterwards his glance falls upon an article as follows: " The Journal *France Moderne* reports: 'All the medical sciences acknowledge that this Elixir cures all heart diseases, meningitic inflammation, and diseases of the arteries and decay of the bones,' to which it adds a rider: 'It prolongs life when used in a suitable way.' (The patient) has recourse to this elixir which he does not cease to use [p. 105] while the malady increases in strength, and its course is swift, until he dies a natural death, and then he learns the truth that these statements are false.

We were astonished at the person who came to Egypt during the past year and began announcing in the public streets to the effect that the medicine of "*Sīkwā*" (سيكوا) was the only cure for deafness, blindness, rickets, consumption, piles, and all incurable illnesses. It is obvious to anyone watching that person seated in a carriage embellished with gold, adorned with mirrors, drawn by a pair of fleet horses and surrounded by a band of musicians, while he himself is proclaiming that the famous *Sīkwā* is leaving Egypt on the morrow, that Galen was risen from the grave, and that this was a suitable chance of gaining possession of his remedy.

Doubtless intelligent people were not deceived by the like of these profitless manifestations. But the strangest of them is what we see printed in the columns of our local journals under the name *Salwar* (or *Salūr*) (سلوار), whose beneficial pills are well known as a " cure " for many illnesses.

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But the chief marvel of his shrewdness was when he heard about the belief of the Egyptians in empirics, and sent them pills to cure them, and began proposing to them things which, if they abstained from them, would alone be sufficient to restore their health. He prescribes bathing in cold water every morning and abstaining completely from drinking or smoking as well as the eating of food half cooked, although if every sick person considered these things he would not need the "cure" of "His Excellency the Servant of Humanity." Those who know science, or who study medicine, wonder exceedingly at the ignorance of teachers and authors who assert: "They (i.e. the doctors) are unable to cure many diseases. They submit to the judgment of their inability to overcome diseases when the *Elixir of* [p. 106] *Judenau* and the drink of *Sīkwā* and the pills of *Salwar* cure all."

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You also see European Pharmacies, especially, and drug-stores, filled with compounds prepared in Europe—"specialities"—for "curing" those sick of such and such an infirmity after so many days' use. If they were genuine then what would be the advantage to invalids in crying out for doctors to pursue medical research? All they would have to do would be to resort to these compounds and dispense with all else.

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The patient with any chest trouble, for example, would simply use *Īrīz Pills* (حبوب ايرز) which, they say, cure all chest disorders.

The patient troubled with V.D., for example, would resort to the *Drink Jībīr* (جبير). It is said to stop all turns, in spite of their different character.

Now are these people really serving mankind by means of their remedies, or are these matters quite devoid of truth, or are they intended for another purpose?

In fact, they are only the errors of swindlers or the snares of those to whom we can commonly apply the name of lawful thieves, a clique who appear in the midst of the throng and the struggle for life and are reduced in spite of themselves to obtaining riches and wealth from any source, provided there is no law to restrain them and no one to prevent them. This is the rule of the new civilization and the modern manner of life.

FOLK MEDICINE IN MODERN EGYPT

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People come forward to contrive tricks to obscure the minds of the multitude, while wicked men lead them wherever they wish just like dumb driven cattle that man leads where he likes. Is there a law to protect mankind from treachery, deceit and cunning ? Or is there a means of influencing people against the intentions of worldly men so as not to permit a tradition [p. 107] of tyranny and destruction ?

I have not spoken without calling in a witness, for many Westerners (leaders of Civilization and servants of Humanity) lose their time in absurdities, the wickedness of which they are the first to admit to other people ; but how harmful they are when they swear they are beneficial ! Whoever is impelled by misfortune will find in one of the famous hotels (in any of the cities of the civilized world), people with appearances indicative of greatness and riches, and faces deceiving the onlookers that they are noble and virtuous. He will see this man of eminent appearance, whom tens of servants wait upon to hear his commands, and for whom splendid carriages are prepared for his delight, and appetising foods for his consumption. Afterwards he will know that he is a gambler or a thief, cunningly endeavouring to place himself among decent people in order to plunder their goods, which they have acquired by the sweat of their brow. Will he say after this that this is Civilization ?

Whoever examines the secrets of some rich men and the reasons for their riches (in the world of success) and knows that it resulted from carrying off the property of the weak and the poor, either by bribery or theft, will he believe, after that, their professing to serve the Truth ?

Or whoever sees a company of doctors—and many sometimes appear among them in such a guise, and boast [p. 108] of their appearance—who begin to demolish with their evils what the virtuous have erected, will he admit what they say : " Verily we have devoted ourselves to the preservation of mankind from the mischiefs of diseases " ?

Nay, he who knows that tens of thousands are lying hid in their lairs like ravenous wolves, professing a discovery and claiming an invention, will not speak after that without sin and wrong. He will see a company of men on whose breasts

Evil has pitched her tent and on whose hearts she has stretched 759
her tent-ropes. Morning and evening these thieves are crafty 757
in ways of carrying off *dirhams* and *dīnārs*. They do not care 577
by what way they succeed. Besides I have read an English book entitled: *How to Become a Famous Doctor*. I used to think before perusing it that it would counsel with regard to responsibility and good conduct, but I saw the opposite of that when there came, in its second chapter [the following]: "The doctor who is endeavouring to acquire money must provide himself for that purpose with methods and set up snares, because money is in the grasp of its owners and it is not possible to extract it except by an extraordinary power, which is swindling and stealing with honour. For this he must know the celebrated meeting places in the city. These he must frequently pass through, hurrying on his way, clothed in his finest garb, which ought to give forth the smell of carbolic acid and iodoform, in order that those present may think he is coming from a surgical operation."

"And when he rides in a carriage, and is at a sick person's, let him pass in it through the best known parts of the town. And if by good luck he chances to know a place having two doors in different streets, let him pass before people through one of them and go out by the other. Then he is hidden from the eyes of beholders for some time after which he returns whence he came. People then imagine that he has visited a patient. He must also look attentively at the patient's dwelling, when he goes in to him, and see [p. 109] what different kinds of things are there. After he sees everything, small and great, and the patient commences to detail his malady, he [the doctor] says to him: 'Now I understand the trouble. Did you not eat such and such? Did you not drink such and such? Did you not indulge in such and such? (mentioning the things which he noticed on entering the patient's house). Then the patient naturally imagines that he is one of the most discerning of physicians, and pins his faith on him and refuses all the instructions of previous doctors. Do not despair, O ye skilful doctors! Many sick people firmly believe that you have knowledge of the Unknown, so follow, therefore, what is pointed out to you! When you meet, in a patient's, with a doctor who

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is acting like you, do not make him a butt for criticism and reproach, but agree with him in order that you may seek his help in increasing your profit. Do you not know that the thief who is not perplexed nor astonished is he who, when he encounters another thief, whom he does not know, in the house to be robbed, is cheerful and happy in appearance. Then each helps the other in the theft in order that they may not be led to the tribunal of retribution, when they quarrel.

" So I counsel you, O doctors ! who are striving after riches ! to make yourself appear before men always with the appearance of being busy with science or research (even if you hate that itself ; for all men like you, do not love science and education for themselves but for the sake of gathering money). Whoever sees you, while you are in your carriage, reading a book or a periodical, will think that there is no one equal to you in the world. And when you are invited to a banquet do not go except to the rich, and if they do not invite you take care to be at their banquets, for on them depend your advancement and your wealth. Try every means for this, even if it leads you to the necessity of forging an invitation card. Do not go near intoxicants at banquets in the sight of men, even if you desire it yourself and you are one of the greatest drunkards. And do not dally with women publicly, even if you are the greatest debauchee." [p. 110.]

In the eighth chapter of that book occurs (the following) : " If a sick person calls you in, and he has previously summoned another doctor and the latter has prescribed for him medicine which you see and recognize, then show your aversion from it and write another prescription for the same medicine (even if the medicine of the previous doctor be specially for the malady), and only add colour to it in order that it may change its original form.

" And if people in one town know you as an ignorant fellow without renown, then travel to another, but be careful that your luck in it be not the same as it was in the former. Dress well according to every state, and before you determine to transfer to a place study the manners, customs and beliefs of its people. Prepare for yourself a drug that changes colour, or a savoury drink, and announce in the new town that you are its discoverer and inventor, even though it never had any particular quality until it was honoured in the eyes of those with whom it was associated as something new. And if you are a surgeon, then announce that you have a method of treatment for one of the diseases common in the place to which you have transferred, and write about it in journals but using the words of their owners in praise of yourself, even if you give them more than the price of the advertisement. 754 757 517

"Then when you succeed, prepare thousands of boxes containing pills with your name, even although the pills are simple and devoid of remedy, and say that they cure such and such diseases. And make much of those who praise them, and associate with them testimonials from the town in which you used to be. (Do not be afraid of that nor apprehensive of those who, you said, testified to the excellence of your pills; thus you will become rich and famous and all your faults will be concealed.)"

Such are their methods in marketing their goods, and such their hopes and their delight. And the truth of the matter is that many doctors take to heart the *Book of* [p. 111] *B*———[1] afore-mentioned, and it is not long before they are richer than Ḳārūn[2] and more renowned than Luḳmān,[3] although they do not know about medicine what would cure the simplest of illnesses. I have never known any of the Westerners to be forgetful of the preceding rules. Nay, all of them act by them, according to their custom, and in doing so put forth every possible effort until the modern people of the East can scarcely compete with them.

Judenau (?) in his book sold in the streets of Paris summoned accurate witnesses of the truth of what he said, and certified it by notices published in his country's papers, so that a periodical (*Alimentation*) [p. 112] recorded this passage: "One of the celebrated physicians said that the citizens of Paris, in which city stupidity is on the increase, should take the Elixir of Judenau so that their mental powers may return to them."

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[1] [I have been unable to find the pronunciation of this name; the Arabic is [illegible]. Tr.]

[2] [The Biblical Korah who appears in the *Koran* as the owner of fabulous wealth. See J. Walker: *Bible Characters in the Koran*, under *Korah*. Tr.]

[3] [The Arab Aesop, celebrated for his wisdom. Tr.]

4:Walker E-4 (no date) 1934 MR13 Fellahin
(ca. 1890) Egypt MR1

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But the testimony of the residents of Shāri'a al-Sarāi al-Ḥamrā in 'Abbāsīya[1] contradicts what they said of this success, as follows: "Verily we were deceived by the statements of our friends the residents of the city of Paris (if what was published in the papers about their statements were true). We used many glasses of that fluid and we became fools of people." Signed by the residents of Shāri'a al-Sarāi al-Ḥamrā.

The immoderate ones who lose their lives in frivolity and immorality and the frequenting of taverns and the indulging in pleasures and pernicious places, and who betake themselves to the Ezbekia district[2] to live and to the Grand Bar as a rendezvous—they indeed use glasses of Judenau. Thus they add stupidity to their wickedness, and they become discontented and declare: "This last experience has taught us that many of the statements of Europeans are impossible, because they have often used knowledge to expedite their trade only, and not for the benefit of the world. So they have deceived those who trusted them. No doubt most of their statements are false and mere guesswork. It is preferable to abstain from strong drink, thus neglecting their statements that cognac and beer take away turbidness and cause fatness. Since we have taken them or similar drinks we have been suffering constantly from continuous diseases and financial embarrassment, not to mention the punishment we are going to have in the next world."

Signed by those who were formerly deceived by the pretensions of modern civilization.

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[1] [A district in Cairo with a well-known asylum. Tr.]
[2] [A neighbourhood in Cairo with an unsavoury reputation. Tr.]

PART TWO[1]

[The author's rather laboured introductory remarks may 114
be briefly summarized thus. The printing of Part Two was slightly delayed for two years (from 1892–4). In the meanwhile he received enquiries concerning the work from all sides, especially from orientalists and anthropologists. In this way he was encouraged to publish what follows.]

I

THE SHABSHABA AND " MILKING OF THE STARS "

The strongest " cure " and most successful drug tried 278
among women to restrain their husbands from flirting with 832
other women and keeping them to themselves, is the *Shabshaba*, and the " *milking of the stars* " (*ḥalb al-nugūm*) comes near it. They are almost alike so that in the course of time their two charms have become confused. (Sometimes they are employed [152]
for the " cure " of some of the nervous diseases which the [153]
common people assert to be due to the Jinn). The *Shabshaba* is very rare in Egypt. Only certain well-known old wives know its real nature. The most famous of these is the Shaikha [191]
Khaḍra al-Aṣwānīya al-Ṣūfīya. She was until 1309 [= 1891] living in a cell at the foot of the [p. 4] Muḳaṭṭam Hills (Cairo) near the tomb of Sīdī 'Umar ibn al-Fāriḍ. [The famous mystical poet (1181–1235). Tr.]. I believe her name is not absent from the memory of those ladies who knew her and verified the success of her " method " and who used to throng to her.

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[1] [Printed in the name of the Tenth International Congress of Orientalists held at Geneva, September, 1894.]

The manner of the act was (for the *Shaikha*) to go with the unfortunate woman, whose husband had been turned from her, to a region far from sight where the " operator " (*mushabshiba*) dyes her face and her hands with a black substance and puts on black clothing, and lets her hair down upon her shoulder and grasps in her hand three fruits. Then she takes the " patient " (*mushabshab lahā*) by her side and burns incense, placing in it *ḥashīsh* and *'anzarūt* (or *Anzarūt*)[1] and *mansir* (?) or *mānistir* (?) and *faḥīsala* (I do not know its real medical name). Thereafter she says :

Yā 'afārīt yā 'afārīt	Oh, Spirits ! Oh, Spirits !
Yā ginn al-gibāl	Oh, Jinn of the Mountains !
Yā sukkān al-buḥūr	Oh, dwellers of the seas !
Yā 'ummār al-burūr	Oh, inhabitants of lands !
Yā bu'ād fi'l-barrīya	Oh, far off folk in the desert !
Yā ḳātilīn al-darrīya[2]	Oh, slayers of offspring !
Yā mukhālifīn Sulīmān	Oh, oppcnents of Solomon[3]
Yā mubarṭi'īn fi'l-widyān	Oh, gallopers in valleys !

I cry to you. Come to me, and help me with the stars of the sky.

Then it is said that the atmosphere becomes dusty and the day is changed to night, and the darkness becomes intensified, while she continues her spell, saying :

Good evening to you, oh, stars of evening ! Oh, yellow ones like apricots ! I have smitten him with three fruits (*thamarāt*) smite ye him with three live coals (*jamarāt*). (Thereupon she names the person in the case, and casts the fruits upon an image [p. 5] of the person made of clay which is in front of her). One ember will come upon his eyes so that he will see none but her [i.e. his forsaken wife] ; and an ember upon his tongue so that he will speak with none but her ; and an ember upon his ears so that he will listen to none but her. Good

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[1] [Gum of a thorny tree that grows in the mountains of Persia. See the *Tadhkara* of Dā'ūd al-Anṭākī, s.v. According to Dozy, *Supplément aux Dictionnaires arabes*, it is *trifolium odoratum*. Tr.]

[2] [i.e. *al-dhurriya*.]

[3] [These are the Jinn who, according to Moslem legends, were forced to assist King Solomon in his works of magic. Tr.]

evening to you, oh, our new moon ! you whose father is 832
Friday [the Moslem holy day], and whose mother is the Festival ! 782
Oh, Glorious Venus with the wakeful eyes ! Take for me from 789
the hair of so and so, the son of so and so, three hairs. Pull them off and mix them and bring them and leave them at the door of so and so the daughter of so and so. Good evening to you, oh, Sindās ! (Sindās is said to be the name of the god of [776]
lust and debauchery). Oh, Sindās ! Oh, Knower of secrets and of . . . (here she names a certain organ of the fair sex, which it is not allowable to mention). (At the same time the S͟haik͟ha uncovers her genital organs and brings one of her shoes and beats that organ seven times until its " servant," who is named Sindās, as mentioned above, appears). Oh, Sindās ! You have helpers ! Oh, Sindās ! Where are your brethren ! Bring him and bind him and at her door release him ! (And hereupon she orders the " patient " to recite the special charm for the purpose, as follows :)

Gāga ! Oh, Gāga ![1] Decide this matter (*hāga*). Bring him with dust on his head and his shoe in my . . . (and she mentions an expression for one of her members which it is not fitting to mention) and his turban in my girdle (*dikka*), hearing no speech but mine. (Then the S͟haik͟ha goes back to the completion of her original spell, and points with her hand to the sky, saying :)

Oh, whirlwind ! Oh, clever one ! You have satans with you !

Drag him and beat him, and carry him away to the home of this poor woman, and leave him there. Oh, Ṣābī ! [776]
Oh, Ṣābī ![2] Oh, Hearer and Answerer ! Bring so and so, the son of so and so, improved and not enraged. If he enters, well and good, and if he goes off, well and good. Let my star and his star be with you in agreement !

(At this time, it is said, the " Helpers " [or Jinn] arrive, of various shapes and appearances, and hearken to the commands of the S͟haik͟ha and go off in a hurry after paying tokens of honour and respect.)

This is the regular form of the *S͟habs͟haba*. And if the person

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[1] [Gāga is the goddess of guidance.]
[2] [The name of a king of the Unbelieving Jinn.]

832 with her has a nervous illness, due to the Jinn, she recites the
782 charm herself along with some modification in the forms of the
789 commands that issue from her Ladyship the *Shaikha*, with a
slight revision of their clauses.

787 [p. 7.] *The true Explanation.* When I wrote my chapters
789 in Part One on Fraternizing with the Jinn (p. 32ff) and on the
124 *Nazil* (p. 30f), I wrote them in the true belief that the Jinn
could not be enslaved. That was after I studied many terrifying books in the Khedivial Library in the Darb al-Gamāmīz (Cairo)[1] constituting almost a quarter of its contents. But I was not the only one who sought what was new, out of a natural love for study which is innate in mankind. For there reached me treatises printed recently in Europe in different languages, whose authors talked about a new subject which they named Spiritism, that is, Spiritualism, or the power of employing spirits. The authors all agreed in what they related of their experiences, or what reached their ears from trustworthy sources, that it is possible to employ the immaterial in the destiny of the material. They differed only at this juncture as to whether they are animal electric rays, or spirits (Jinn) bewitching by the power of incensing and special incantations. Our objection to the holders of the former belief is that they are unable to employ these rays to influence either a person whom the medium (" influencer ") has not seen, or the medium himself. It is as if someone asked the " enchanter " to influence someone whom neither of the two knew, but [p. 8] whose name alone they heard. In spite of this they mention in their treatises that it is possible to employ this spirit for any purpose whatsoever in the case of any person they wish, whether known to them, or unknown.

As for the case of a known person, we agree with their belief,
[754] since we have seen in the matter of Envy (see Part One, p. 78)
what accounts for that.

791 As for the holders of the second belief, namely the employ-
787 ment of spirits (or Jinn) by a special way, would that I knew what to say to-day to the learned ones of the civilised world who, until ten years ago, used to lay it down that knowledge was preceded by reason and fortified by experience. But " in

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[1] [Now called the Royal Library and located at Bāb al-Khalk. Tr.]

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But in this case the supernatural does not enter under this definition." To-day they have brought forward theories seeking to convince their readers of their truth. In reality, they are not the first fruits of their civilisation, nay, the Arabs of Pre-Islamic days said so thousands of years ago. And they say that Ḍaḥḥāk al-Fihrī, one of the petty kings of the Pre-Islamic days killed during one of his raids, three daughters of an old seeress. So she made to appear on his back as a punishment for that, a spreading ulcer with a fierce itch which could not be soothed unless by the application of human brains [p. 9] upon it. It was not long until the ulcer opened its mouth and swallowed its food. And if Ḍaḥḥāk was slow, a voice shouted from the ulcer: Bring my food! or if not, I will slay you! On account of this he destroyed a great number of his subjects. They explain that it was so because the seeress did what she did in the body of Ḍaḥḥāk in order to be avenged on him, first by punishment, and lastly by his death at the hands of his subjects, a great number of whom he destroyed.

There is also the well-known story of 'Abīd ibn al-Abraṣ[1] with the serpent who was burning with thirst and he gave him water to drink. Then it appeared to him after two days in the form of a camel, when his own camel had gone astray, and he recited to it the well-known poem, part of which runs:

> " Goodness survives even if the time be long;
> But Evil is the worst thing with which to provide yourself." [539]

In short, since these pagan tales were not certified as true, 121
and since the *Shabshaba* and the experiments of Spiritism were 276
accompanied by the use of narcotic substances (for we have 114
seen that *ḥashīsh* formed a part of the incense of the *Shaikha Khaḍra*; and the Italian M—— says in his treatise on Spiritism that consorting with women and indulging in debauchery, and using *ḥashīsh* and intoxicants all help to produce at once wonderful spiritual results) then we say that perhaps the matter has been confused in the mind of the experimenters. Thus they think their imaginings are real, and they distinguish

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[1] [A well-known Pre-Islamic poet at the Lakhmid Court at al-Ḥira. Tr.]

121 276 114 in their phantasies "helpers" (*A'wān*) and spirits (*Jinn*), and they picture mighty happenings which were accomplished at the hands of spirits [p. 11] by those incantations and names, during the absence of their reason in the smoke of *ḥashīsh*; just as the *Shaikha Khaḍra* and her colleagues used *ḥashīsh* in incensing only to stupefy the "remnant" of reason in the woman whom the devils of slander and defamation have deceived. Thus there appears to her eyes, what eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, nor the reason of any rational being verified.

II

THE KAMARA,[1] OR OPHTHALMIC HOSPITALS IN THE VILLAGES

164 757 ALLAH Most High created no land whose people needed to take more care of their eyes than our own land of Egypt, on account of its inhabitants being so subject to dangerous ophthalmia. But He decreed upon the land in past times the lack of many doctors, who are the mainstay of health. Thus the sick, including those suffering from eye-disease, were compelled to appeal to quacks among the ignorant people. With the passage of time the decree of custom became fixed in the minds of the people up to the present time, when medicine has so obviously progressed. Yet we still see great crowds visiting these false physicians to be cured, on the outbreak of diseases. But they only add to their danger and place heavy stumbling blocks [p. 12] in front of the doctor on the day when their "cure" ends in failure, and the patient comes to the cities to be cured of his illness.

757 756 757 In the Gharbīya district there is a woman in a village named *Minyat Ganāḥ*, who has made her house an ophthalmic hospital. Ignorant women seek her out from every quarter, in connection with their different eye-troubles. She has one method to

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[1] [It is named in some provinces the *Shīsha*.]

"cure" all, namely, to segregate them for forty-one days in a 757
room darkened and tightly locked, without feeding them during 759
their stay there except with thin bread and molasses (lit. black honey). This woman comes to visit them every morning only, and performs on them the "cure" by a wonderful system. If any of them experiences a violent pain she makes for her a ring or two for her temple or her neck, or else she cauterizes her with iron rings in the foregoing places.

Women come to her to be "treated" for complete "ad- 757
hesive" obscurations, or retinal inflammation, or atrophy of 278
the visual nerve, or any other of the grievous diseases all of which the woman (quack) characterizes by the name of "blindness." She begins by administering to them a drop of the juice of an onion for one week. In the second week she makes for them a collyrium of ginger (of equal parts of sugar-candy and ginger). [p. 13.] In the remaining three weeks she drops in their eyes a drop composed of dew which has fallen overnight upon the leaves of the Persian cane (or bamboo), mixed with the powder of burnt bones of crows.

In the Gharbīya province, in a village called *Kafr Khiḍr,* 759
about a quarter of an hour distant from *Ṭanṭā*, there is a man who lays claim to a medicine for the eyes. He has harmed thousands of God's creatures, because his "method" is
quicker in damaging than the previous one. He is prone to 752
make surgical operations on all who seek him out, whatever the disease may be. One of my medical friends told me (as follows): I visited the man one day when he had just begun to perform an operation. He split the cornea with a broad knife, and all the moistures of the eye flowed out, and in a word, there were cast out with them the iris and the internal covers. The man, however, did not become confused, but bound up the eye of the patient, and said to him, "Now you will go home and sleep upon your back without moving in the least or speaking a word during three days. If you do not do that then I am not responsible for your eye, if anything happens to it." My friend said, I was sorry for this poor fellow, but I checked myself, and said that it was not necessary to grieve for the loss of sight when Allah has blinded insight.

FOLK MEDICINE IN MODERN EGYPT

III

RHEUMATISM AND DONKEY MARROW

759 208 One of the ancient "prescriptions" successfully used for *Ḥidār* of the joints (i.e. rheumatism) is taking the marrow from the feet of a dead donkey and rubbing it on the part affected for seven days. They go to extremes in the matter until the patient is compelled to bring it from remote regions, after his family have set spies and observers in all the villages to inform them of the death of a donkey, male or female. Sometimes they employ the fat of a camel or serpent.

The true explanation. It is possible that in the spinal substance of the donkey's bone there may be a soothing element, which the learned have not yet discovered. But it is very improbable that there is an element counteracting or removing inflammation, since a patient told me that that marrow is not exciting or burning, but that it is like ordinary fat. Perhaps it may here have some effect on muscular rheumatism, but in [p. 15] the case of rheumatism of the joints it is of little use.

IV

THE UNIQUE ELEMENT (AL-GŌHAR AL-FARD)

759 159 Those who go back to what we wrote in the first part (page 24) concerning piles and dysentery (*rīḥ al-mas͟h'ūmāl*) will know the secret of those fancies in the villages. But to-day the crowds of quacks are not satisfied with propagating their errors in the villages, but they go so far as to publish the same in the newspapers. I read in an Arabic newspaper an advertisement by a man called Abū 'Ujaiza of the village of Fīs͟ha, residing in the dwelling of K͟hawāja K͟halīl Kamāl in Ṭanṭā. He "cures" piles in the space of three days, at least,

so he says. May Allah forgive him, or K͟hawāja K͟halīl Kamāl 757
his dupe, for publishing his "craft," as we have heard that he 759
agreed with him to divide the profits. By my life, if he were able to cure them in the space of three days he would enrich the world, not only in Egypt but in Europe and America. Then it would be fitting to name this medicine of his "The Unique Element," but [p. 16] we do not think his medicine differs from that of S͟haik͟h Aḥmad Al-K͟haṭṭābī (May Allah pity him !). At least it does not surpass the astringents and sedatives which have an effect on these hæmorrhoidal tumours, nor does it ease their pain or reduce their size.

But what shall we say to Abū 'Ujaiza, who proclaims in the newspapers—assisted by the liberty given to science to advertise without opposition—that his medicament "cures" piles in three days? We consider nothing more fitting than the arrest of such a man so that he may either prove his veracity and be rewarded, or else show his mendacity and receive his deserts.

V

THE CHARM FOR THE ENVIED

In all successful occasions of "Envy"—compare Part I 754
page 78—the "old wife" is called on to use the *Raḳwa* (or charm), but not every "old wife" is able to do so. Only some of them, among those skilled in the art of "doctoring" can do so. When she comes she orders alum (?)[1] and *fasūk͟h*, both
of which are thrown upon a blazing fire. Then she places the 755
incense with her hand on the head of the patient ("the Envied 754
One") and says:

"The first in the name of Allah; the second in the name of Allah; the third [p. 17] in the name of Allah; the fourth in the name of Allah; the fifth in the name of Allah; the sixth in the name of Allah; the seventh, there is no power or strength

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[1] [The Arabic text has *s͟habah*, which seems a mistake for *S͟habb*. Tr.]

755 754 except in Allah ! I charm you and seek to enchant you from my eye and the eye of your mother, and your father, and the eye of the people who "envied" you. I charm you and seek to enchant you even as Mohammed charmed his she-camel. He placed for her fodder, which she tasted. She had been refactory; she became docile."

Strange to say, I saw an "old wife" who, during the charm, was moving her hand in front of the eyes of the "Envied" and his sides. And she was yawning, and influencing him until he was yawning too. She did not stop this until the "Envied" poured with perspiration and slept during the charm. It is a method somewhat resembling magnetic hypnotism. The truth of the matter is that it suits that ailment, because it is successful, as we said in Part I, page 78, because of electric magnetic influence.

VI

THE CHARM OF 'ĀSHŪRĀ'[1]

789 AT the new moon of Muḥarram every year you see people going about the streets carrying on their heads salt, or sugar or coriander (*kuzbara*) or some other things. These are called *Raḥwātiya*, from *Raḥwa* a charm. Women and young men invite them to perform this charm. So they enter houses and place the salt and the coriander upon the fire and utter the incantation [p. 18] as follows:

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Oh, fine salt ! Oh, chaste substance !
Your mother is free ; your father, fine !
Incense the coverlet that protects you from shoulder pains !
Incense the chicken lest it eat and die !

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[794] [1] [The '*Ashūrā*' is a Moslem fast day (voluntary) observed on the tenth of the month Muḥarram. The sacred character of this date has already been referred to above, Part I, p. 84. Tr.]

Incense the mattress [*ṭurrāḥa*] that brings you rest!
Incense the spoon from the eye of Muṣṭafā's mother!

Then he says:

My incense is fine stuff from the eloquent Prophet!
My incense is such and such from Our Lady (Zainab)![1]
My incense is bewitched from Sīdī Barka.
My incense is received from Sīdī Madbūlī.[2]
My incense is Jāwī from Sīdī 'Ashmāwī.
Sindās, oh, Sindās! Oh, Mursī! Oh, Abū'l-'Abbās![3]

Then he returns to the beginning and says:

Lo the eyes of the maiden are like cutting swords;
And the eye of the baker is hotter than fires.
Lo, the eyes of the water-carrier bring healing from Allah.
Lo, the eyes of the girl are hotter than a javelin;
But the eyes of the lad are more protective than a coat of mail.
Lo, the eye of the carpenter is sharper than a nail.
And the eye of a woman is keener than a scythe.
The eyes of a neighbour, fascinating and fickle,
Act with complete deception, saying:
Thou, oh, my neighbour! wast praising Allah and grateful.
So remove the accursed thing from the home of this poor woman
That leaves her mourning.
Destroy the palaces and populate the graves.
I have incensed this basket from the eye of [p. 19] the mother of Ḥauna.
I have incensed these steps from the eye of the mother of Sālim.
Incense these mice lest they take the bread and send it to neighbours![4]

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[1] [Granddaughter of Muhammad. Tr.]
[2] [Well-known local saint in Cairo. Tr.]
[3] [Saint in Alexandria. Tr.]
[4] [The interpretation of these rhymes is largely conjectural, if not sometimes impossible. The Arabic text which is unvocalized is an unsatisfactory attempt to render the Colloquial Egyptian doggerel in terms of the defective Arabic script. See plate 4. Tr.]

789 Such people keep on mentioning in detail all the possible things which are to be found in dwelling houses, pretending that all that year no misfortune will overtake the thing whose name is mentioned in this incantation. Strange to say the common people are not the only ones who believe in the imaginings of these devils, but many people of rank also, whom we would think above such futilities. It may be that the experience of the future will erase from the mind all the vain beliefs of the past, for often they were purveyors of destruction, and a means of ruin and mischief.

VII

A "MIRACLE"

755 ONCE in the provinces I heard a crowd asking a man, a poor
231 *fellāḥ*, about the welfare of his buffalo. He said that it was "cured." I asked concerning the ailment and the curative drug. The man said: For two days the buffalo was yielding milk and blood. So I asked Rūma (an "old wife" of the village) about this question. She advised me to carry a halter of the buffalo at dawn [p. 20] and bury it in a forsaken grave, and, a little before morning, fetch it without anyone seeing me. I did that and the buffalo was "cured."

We hope that our brethren the veterinary surgeons will give us the advantage of the effect of this "remedy." We do not wish to enter into the medical treatment of animals, since they are more knowledgeable than we are regarding it, and to them may there be much gratitude and abundant praise!

VIII

MEASLES AND THE ALEXANDRIAN SHIRT

755
162 THE *fellāḥīn* are in the habit of "curing" their children,
292 who are smitten with measles, by clothing them in a shirt of

silk, coloured red, and named the Alexandrian shirt (*al-ḳamīṣ* 755 164 292
al-Iskandirānī). (In reality it is made at Edkū[1] and its neighbourhood.)

It has some alleviating effect on skin trouble, for on account of the softness and smoothness of the shirt the skin is less irritated. But the danger, really, is that in the village there is to be found only one shirt set apart for this purpose. Hence it becomes a means of infection and the transmission of this danger. If each ailing child had a new shirt brought to him it would be favourable for a cure, a cure harmless and often beneficial.

IX

"THE BLUE WATER" AND CAUTERIZING THE HEAD

Headache (*ṣudā'*)[2] either "moving" or "smiting," is very 164
common [p. 21] in the provinces. Most of the cases we witnessed were among those whose eyes turn backwards and forwards on the occurrence of attacks of glaucoma, the pains arising from "the blue water."[3] They "cure" that ailment, 752
that is, the "moving" variety, by cauterizing the head generally. It is like the other pitiless "cures" whose purpose the quacks know is to create a new and more painful counter-agent by which the patient forgets, or pretends to forget, his original ailment for some days, on account of his preoccupation with the intensity of his new pain. But that only lasts some days until the pain of the original ailment, whose cause was not rectified, becomes overpowering now that it is away from the influence of the quacks.

I knew of a man in the village of Maḥalla Diyāya in the Province of G͟harbīya, who repelled the intensity of the pain of this ailment by means of cauterizing the temple. This is an

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[1] [A village in the Delta 28½ miles east of Alexandria. Tr.]

[2] [See note, p. 54.]

[3] [The colloquial name in Egypt for glaucoma. Tr.]

752 old " method " which is only of advantage to its practitioner, who lives comfortably in the shadow of its effect on the minds of simpletons.

X

THE "CURE" FOR ULCERS

164 The " old wife " prescribes for the patients who are suffering from chronic ulcers (*nawāṣīr*) having fetid purulent secretions, the following " prescription " : 750 Mix one part of snuff (or tobacco dust) with one part of natron (its usual name [p. 22] is *atrūn*, and it is sesquicarbonate of soda). Pour on them two parts of very pure olive-oil and boil the whole for a while. Then anoint the tube of the ulcer (*nāṣūr*) and it will be cured.

Some excellent people have attested to me that it is a " cure " that has been proved by actual observation to be advantageous. It may be that time will show the truth of this experiment and beneficial remedy. But it is well known to-day that there is no cure for ulcers except scraping them with special instruments, or erasing the ulcerous tube, thus removing the cause, and sewing up the new wound. Sometimes cautery with a heated probe, or an electric cauterizer is employed.

Explanation of the " prescription." The snuff is a cauterizer, and on its entering the wounds it awakens their vitality, which has been weakened by the passage of time, and it changes the nature of the vile secretions for the better. Then fleshy pieces grow up filling the cavity of the ulcerous tube. (But that only results on the supposition that an ulcer is found continuing after the removal of its cause, such as ulcers resulting from a bullet which has entered a muscle deeply, and remains for some time with the surrounding part suppurating. Then it is extracted and the road leading to its original lodging-place has the appearance of [p. 23] an ulcerous tube. But appearances are not evidence).

FOLK MEDICINE IN MODERN EGYPT

XI

THE "CURE" FOR ITCH AND DRY SCAB

AMONG the severest of the diseases that afflict mankind is 164
skin-disease (or eczema) with its different varieties, either
moist or dry. The "cure" for the dry variety among the 755
"old wives" is to clothe the afflicted one in a garment of
pure silk.

A very trustworthy person has related that he had not omitted to use everything prescribed by modern medicine, but without success. So he employed the silk garment and his ailment passed completely away. Indeed the prescription of the "old wife" agrees with what is set down in Canon Law
regarding prohibiting men from wearing pure silk except in 984
the case of itch.[1]

XII

THE "CURE" FOR PROTUBERANT TUMOURS

THE "old wives" do not stick at any of the diseases unless 755
it is outside the sphere of trickery to affect its "cure." They do not trouble whether by the process of imagination, either through the power of the Jinn, or the development of thought, a "cure" will result. So beware of a very valuable "cure" for tumours which appear on the skin.

The patient seeks out a hen, free from blemish, without a single white feather, and watches her until she lays an egg in a place unreached [p. 25] by the rays of the sun. Then he brings lentils to her with their seeds to all appearance the same in number as the tumours on his body. After he has emptied

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[1] [For the references to the prohibition of silken garments, see A. J. Wensinck: *A Handbook of Early Muhammadan Tradition*, Leiden, 1927, p. 45 f. Tr.]

755 out the contents of the egg in the dark place, he takes a lentil grain and places it on a tumour and recites over it this charm: Oh, lentil become a tumour! Oh, tumour become a lentil!

He then places the lentil inside the egg, and so on until the number of lentils equals the number of tumours. Then he runs in haste to an eastern wall on which the rays of the sun are striking and buries them in it, and the tumours fall away in consequence, in a few days, not exceeding a week. And this is truly beneficial according to the story.

[774] *The true explanation.* We return, as we already said in Part I (p. 27) to the question of demons (*'afārīt*). Often they (i.e. the "old wives") assert that the hen (particularly a black one, since that is mentioned in the "prescription") has an obedient servant for herself, her eggs and their possessor, and by the secret of his influence upon diseases, or by his powerful relationship with the demon of diseases, the tumours will fall away. [753] They believe that every disease has a demon, as is the current creed among the village witches, according to another opinion.

Often the shrinkage of the vessels feeding these tumours is brought about by a certain degree of imaginative influence. [p. 26.] Then (the tumours) wither gradually, and this is as far as medical explanation of their falling off is possible, if what the narrators say is correct.

XIII

CATARACT AND AMMONIA

181 Egypt is indeed a happy hunting ground for every trader and quack. How simple our Egyptian *fellāḥ* is! He loses his life and cheapens his body for the experiments of those who trade in spirits. But the *fellāḥ* of Egypt is not to be blamed, for he has no instructor.

164 There came to me one day a patient complaining of his eyes. On examination I saw the left eye-ball protruding from the

F 164 F 757

bone and the eye-lids were swollen and distended, and the eye-ball wound was violently inflamed, veiling the cornea. When I asked him the reasons for the ailment he hesitated somewhat in answering, so I repeated the question and he answered as follows: "There was a cataract in my eye so I went to such and such a doctor." (He mentioned a Greek who used to live in a small tavern in the neighbourhood of the new vegetable market, who claimed a knowledge of medicine for the eyes. The date was Ramaḍān, 1311 = 1893). "He placed ammonia in my eye, and said that after three times it would eat away the granular lids (*laḥmîya*) from the eye, and lo, I am as you see!"

So I subjected him to the treatment counteracting inflammation by means of suitable drops until these ailments were removed. And I declare that if that man had delayed and had not hastened of his own accord to a qualified doctor, his eye would have become a prey to the voracity of the ammonia.

XIV

MĀNASTIR[1] AND WOMEN

E F 978 757

I WAS one day sitting in the shop of one of the druggists in the *wikāla* of *Abū Zaid* in Cairo, when there came to him an old woman, and asked him if he had any *mansir* (sic). So I interrupted by asking her what benefit it had. (This was after I knew that she meant *mânastir*). She said: My son, this is of benefit to women whose bodies are weak because of sleeplessness and disease or irritation. When "the bead of the cow" [see page 76] and *ḳirtās* and *mufattaḳa* [see page 77] are of no avail there is brought to her *mansir* to the weight of an oke.[2] (She means that the weight of the *mânistir* creates in the woman who takes it, fat to the amount of an oke.)

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[1] [See above, p. 96.]

[2] [*Ūkka* or *ukka*, the Turkish pound in general use in Egypt, and usually termed *oke* by Europeans. It is equivalent to 2¾ lb. Tr.] E 804

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After the man had answered her request and she had gone away, I thought about that "remedy," but I did not find it in any way resembling *mānastir*, except that both of them are from inside the testicle (*ḥiṣya*) of an animal. I was astonished at that. The druggist said to me that in the past this article was asked in connection with this and similar "prescriptions," e.g. as a tonic for coition, and for use in pregnancy, etc. He had men in India searching for it. But to-day the new medicine has nullified these things, and traces remain [p. 29] only on the tongues of "old wives." The laboratory of G——— and F——— and D———[1] has made it easy for us to find this article, however, at a low price since it is imported from Europe. These are the results of the progress of industry. How marvellous it is of Science to abolish it at first in its capacity as a natural product, and then find it (or something counterfeiting it) by way of industry!

E F [832] [843]

The true explanation. It is not possible to ascribe *mānastir* to the testicles of an animal unless we consider as true the theory of the Elixir of Judenau (cf. Part I, p. 88 ff) or the bringing back of youth, after old age has come, by means of the testicles of the Indian pig.

I have witnessed the injection of this quintessence during the days when I was in the Ḳaṣr al-'Ainī Hospital. Our Professor, Doctor Ḥasan Pās͟hā Maḥmūd administered it to an old man called Mūsā, the S͟haik͟h of the village of Ṭurāna in the Province of Buḥaira, who was afflicted with the nervous trembling of old age. But he did not change anything of the state of the patient.

XV

CORNS

F 164 757

Corns [lit. "Eyes of fish"] named "nails" (*misāmīr*) are one of the ailments [p. 30] of civilisation, or the excess of women

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[1] [Here he mentions the names of certain well-known Cairo druggists in the European quarter. Tr.]

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imitating each other. Because corns result from the pressure of tight shoes upon the toes. They "cure" it by placing a piece of tomato upon it, and leaving it for three hours. Then it ceases.

XVI

IN THE VICINITY OF THE BĀB ZUWAILA[1]

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759

In front of the Bāb Zuwaila, named the Bāb al-Mutawallī, there is a man who sells *kunāfa*[2] too renowned to be forgotten by the consumers of this article. My Professor, Muḥammad Bey Durrī told me about him that he "cures" all kinds of eczema (*ḳūba*) and especially what particularizes the varieties of *karfa* (see p. 68). He had, he told me, a little maid-servant afflicted with this ailment. He directed her to the proper treatment, but an "old wife" took her off with her to that man without his knowledge. The result was good, for she was "cured."

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The true explanation. This man employs certain ointments doubly compounded, and since their success is assured he does not abandon the means by enquiring too closely concerning it. We are aware that crowds in the provinces are renowned for this and are called *Ḥāwīyīn* (or snake-charmers) since they recite certain words over a glass containing olive-oil and the yolk of an egg and spit into it. And here is the importance of the slimy mixture composed [p. 32] of the two substances above-mentioned, since by it the effect of outside influences is prevented.

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[918]

Near to that in effect is the juice exuding from the sycamore (which is called "the milk of the sycamore," *leben al-gummaiz*). It is famous among the *fellāḥīn* for the "cure" of different kinds of skin-diseases.

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[1] [One of the famous old city-gates of Cairo, also called the *Bāb al-Mutawallī* because a very holy Shaikh of that name is supposed to appear there sometimes. Numerous relics of hair, rags and teeth are suspended from its nails by the superstitious folk who hope for a "cure" or a blessing thereby. Tr.]

[2] [i.e. sweet vermicelli. Tr.]

XVII

"WINKING" (ṬARFA)

164 SLIGHT shocks falling upon the eye-ball cause irritation
which often leads to a dangerous state on most occasions. All
such afflictions arising from an external influence are named
757 by the common people *Ṭarfa.* They have sundry "cures"
for it. One of these is effective for the time being. It consists
of closing the eyelid and placing the hand outspread above it.
Then another person puts his mouth to this hand and blows
898 upon it with his foul breath, deep breaths one after the other.
Shortly after we see them ordering the milk of a woman to be
brought and a drop placed in the eye. Then it is "cured."

The true explanation. As for the blowing upon the eye, it is of little account, since it has no real influence upon it. But milk has been used since ancient times for placing [p. 33] in the eye for all light irritations which occur therein. It is very good. Many *koḥl* manufacturers still order it even to-day.

The true treatment. The handiest and simplest thing for the patient is to boil a little Greek camomile [*bābūnig Rūmī*] (or "the chickens of 'Ali's mother") and throw into that hot mixture a piece of tissue, which he places at once upon his eye for the space of a quarter of an hour for two hours. Remove all customary eye-salves. There is no harm in using human or animal milk, since it mollifies the inflamed condition. But if the eye is in a serious state, then the first thing is to hasten to an oculist.

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XVIII

A "CURE" FOR ITCH (GARAB)

ITCH is common among children in the elementary schools 164
in the villages on account of the meeting there of the many conditions which help its development, such as dirtiness, moisture and carelessness. They "cure" it in the beginning 757
by breakfasting every morning on a piece of "camel-driver's sulphur"—(Thus it is known among them. It is natural sulphide)—inside the yolk of an egg. If that is not successful there is the final "cure." The poor child is taken to the sewer of the village mosque [p. 34] and his body besmeared with those putrid substances, which they leave upon him for two complete days. Some of the Shaikhs of the villages exceed the bounds in the efficacy of this "cure." I have seen companies of them leading their boys to the sewer of Sīdī Ibrāhīm al-Dasūḳī at the time of the *Maulid* [or Birthday Festival] to perform with them there. This method is harmful and a hindrance to a real cure.

The true explanation. Nobody denies that compounds of sulphur are beneficial in the curing of all diseases that are named parasitic. But in spite of that there is no escape from observing cleanliness. Treatment by "camel-driver's sulphur" is good—(the sewer method, of course, is a quite different matter)—because the sedimentary substances contained in sulphurous substances touch the affected skin as agents and act strongly. So would that people smeared the body of the child with sulphur instead of with those filthy substances!

XIX

THE "CURE" FOR BALDNESS

THOSE exposed to being smitten by it in the villages are also 164
the children of the elementary schools, because, like the

164 preceding, it is an infectious parasitic disease, and found in very hideous forms. Through neglect of it, and failure to attend to it at the beginning, it baffles physicians and becomes a danger.

757 The thoughts of the "old wives" are perplexed regarding its "cure." Some of them order anointing with petrol; others order tar and other substances. All are profitless. The famous method is "the cap of pitch" [*ṭaḳiyat-al-zift*] in other words, making the pitch (which is the resin of certain coniferæ) flow upon the head of the patient hot, in the form of a skull-cap[1] and leaving it for weeks, nay months. Then the quack comes one day to pull off the cap—a day of distress for the patient!—since his hair, nay his skin also, sticks to the pitch. So he suffers tortures, and blood flows after the terrible uproar of pulling off the cap. Very often the patient faints on account of the intensity [p. 36] of the pain and the great loss of blood. Then after that there is brought half an oke[2] of common salt crystals and the head of the patient is rubbed with them violently.

Do not ask about the pains of this savage method. After a month has passed the "operation" is repeated. There is no need to witness it to know that the second "operation" is more grievous than the first because the healing of the wound is not complete and the new skin is pulled off a second time, and the pains are doubled. In view of all this, say whether this method is advantageous with its violence and danger! Even if this method were successful sometimes, the success would be due solely to the exclusion of the air by means of the cap prescribed against the parasite, because it ranks as a parasite called aerobic, that is "air-loving."

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[1] [*Ḳalansuwa*, or *ḳalansiya*, the name of a tight-fitting cap often worn under a turban. Tr.]

[2] [See above, p. 111.]

FOLK MEDICINE IN MODERN EGYPT

XX

SHAHKA

The "old wives" of the provinces generally use the name F 164
shahka for the malady of small-pox, which attacks infants and
appears in the form of vesicles full of a liquid which is at first
pure, then it becomes turbid and bursts. The "old wives" of F 753
the provinces and the mothers of the infants assert that the 754
occurrence of these vesicles is caused by a woman or a man
glancing at the child with a look of admiration for its beauty,
and delight in its loveliness. Then the child falls after that into
the state of that illness. Hence it is called *shahka* (injury by F 757
the evil eye) or *nazra* (evil glance). They "cure" it, as is well
known, by the child's mother stealing from her neighbour a
piece of her dough with which she smears those vesicles.

The true explanation. There is no advantage known in smearing these vesicles with dough. As a matter of fact this method is one belonging to the village pick-pockets and provincial thieves. The history of absurdities preserves it, and transmitters hand it down. [p. 38.] In the beginning of the whole business it was a means of accomplishing the theft of a neighbour's property under the excuse of a "prescription order." For what woman would not give her neighbour a piece of dough to cure her poor child!

XXI

A "HARMLESS" PRESCRIPTION

One of the "old wives" prescribed for one of the leading E 757
men of Cairo, who complained of a wound in his leg, the follow- 208
ing "prescription": Powdered leg of dove [calumba] and
greasy wax, the former being thrown into the latter after
boiling. After cooling a little, the soft paste is taken and

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750 applied to the wound. It resembles soft collodium[1] except
308 that the latter is beneficial because of its transparency, which makes it allowable to witness the progress of the wound beneath it without the need of lifting it and causing the fleshy surfaces to bleed.

XXII

F

THE "REMOVED" HEART

164 WE see the "old wives" diagnosing anæmia as "the removal
753 of the heart and its being changed from its place as a result of an accident." They "cure" it as follows: The patient sits as in
755 the case of *Taḳrīfa* (see Part I, p. 19) [p. 39] and the "old wife" sits down in front of him and places her fore-finger under the xiphoid cartilage, which they imagine is "the feather of the heart" (ريشة القلب) or its gristle. Then after moving it a little the "old wife" cries out, as if she had stumbled upon a buried person, saying: Oh, my child! Your heart is removed and the "feather" (*rīsha*) is falling considerably!

The true explanation. They assert that the xiphoid cartilage is bound to the heart by strong ties so that when the heart changes it pulls it in because it is like a tent-peg holding it firm. They "cure" the patients by one of two methods:

(1) The first is an endeavour to raise the above-mentioned "feather" to the top, i.e. returning it to its original position. It is necessary to resume this "operation" for seven days, the action lasting each day about ten minutes.

(2) The second is famous for its success. The patient is ordered to go to the door of a house opening on the west, and to hang by his right hand from that door in such a way that the side mentioned carries the rest of his body. He must have filled his mouth with water, and must remain thus without breathing for a space of time varying according to the ability of the patient. When he feels he is without power to retain his

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[1] [Pyro-xylin, gun-cotton. Tr.]

respiration he spits out the water from his mouth forcibly and 755
comes down without mishap. In most cases, however, giddiness overcomes the person, and he falls in a faint and does not get up for some time. [p. 40.]

The true treatment. Since this ailment is nought but bloodlessness, which prolongs many a long illness, its cure is comprised in taking healthy precautions such as (after the removal of the cause) the taking of iron compounds.

XXIII

THE "SEVERED" HEART

WHEN any sick person complains of weakness in his strength 753
and withering in his body after severe fevers or very depressing illnesses the "old wives" of the village diagnose his illness as "the severing of the heart." (انقطاع القلب).

The true explanation. To this they attribute causes which are 753
weaker than a spider's web, such as that the patient had in the time of his health carried something heavy for example,
and they assert that the cords of the heart have been cut by [826]
this means. I know that Farag Abū Maḥmūd of the village of Munāshela in the Province of Buḥaira (he is the eczema doctor, see Part I, p. 77) cauterizes those afflicted by this ailment, burning deeply all along the vertebral canal. Often he increases his kindness and beneficence towards the patient by burning him in the navel two or three times.

XXIV

THE "SPLITTING" OF THE EYE

EVERY day we see hundreds of *fellāḥīn* complaining of inter- 164
mittent ophthalmia, especially at the beginning of the summer

164 season. The "old wives" "prescribe" for them the white of
228 eggs mixed with spirit of tutty, or *tūtiyā khalīlī* (oxide of zinc
757 and cadmium and their sulphates). As a result the eye will be "cured" with marvellous rapidity.

The true explanation. The "old wives" pretend that this tutty has a hidden power in attracting the redness of the eye and sucking it up completely. The truth of the matter is that the majority of the eyes which they diagnose as "split" are affected with chronic granular ophthalmia. They are affected by sharp twinges caused by congestion. [p. 42.] Indeed the spirit of tutty does influence temporarily, and that is on account of its arresting the inflamed vessels whereby the eye becomes clear. But it lasts only for a little, until the malady returns with greater force.

The true treatment. There are special remedies for it, and certain operations. Let the patient, however, in these circumstances consult eye-specialists on account of the danger of this serious malady.

XXV

ḤASAN AGHĀ IN DAMANHŪR

759 Ḥasan Aghā, above-mentioned, is famous for the "cure" of stone, and extracting it from the urinary bladder. His reputation is widespread, and patients resort to him from all quarters. (And not only those suffering from stone but from any illness in the bladder of uncertain symptoms.) He has an agency in Damanhūr which he has made like a hospital for his
752 numerous patients. His method is to begin by bringing a large plate full of hot water, in which he seats the patient for a little. Then he inserts two fingers of his left hand inside the man's rectum and slips between them a knife with which he wounds the patient's vitals. The blood flows in torrents. Sometimes the patient faints when he sees the blood; sometimes he screams asking for relief. Then our clever quack

(Ḥasan Aghā) seizes this opportunity and smears a pebble 752 (which he had previously prepared [p. 43] with the help of hospital servants or surgical attendants) with the blood of the patient. After certain exertions and the display of a little effort (to complete the deception) he hands over to the patient the stone moist with blood. This is the method of Ḥasan Aghā who obtains enormous wealth in return for his fatigue and service on behalf of the Egyptian world. For his easy circumstances are due to many ignorant folk who are in a worse state than beasts of burden since there is no value in life or health among them. But it is a pity that Ḥasan Aghā 682 is to-day (June, 1894) engaged in prison, since the Government arrested him and the hand of Justice took revenge on him for killing one of the patients in his agency. Do not ask about what grief the people of those parts had when they suffered their famous "surgeon." We wish the excellent Aghā, aforementioned, a good life in penal servitude at Ṭurra[1] and we hope that Allah will inspire his devotees with intellect to guide them aright thereby, when the calamities of diseases afflict them.

XXVI

THE INJECTION WITH "THE BITTER TOY"

For long we have heard from people about extravagances 757 in the matter of injection, and that it produces fat in those who are lean and slender. When we asked certain people as to the composition of the substances entering into the injection they answered that that was the knowledge of the womenfolk. [p. [illegible]4.] Allah decreed, however, that a certain woman of Cairo came to indicate to me one day what it did to her daughter who complained of the flow of blood with the feces and violent dysentery. So I asked her concerning the cause. She hesitated a little; then she said: I went to an "old wife" famous for injection in order that she might attend to my daughter because she was lean. She produced "*the Bitter Toy*" (*al-la'ba al-murra*) and boiled it in pig's grease for half an hour, and then placed it in a metal syringe, and bade me hold the

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[1] [A well-known convict establishment near Cairo. Tr.]

957 girl firmly and inject the liquid, which was boiling, into her anus. After that she began rolling her upon the tiled floor to smother her screams on account of the intensity of the pain. She fainted and we sprinkled water on her face. She has been ill ever since that day.

The true explanation. We do not know whether " the bitter toy " is what is named " bitter sweet " (*al-ḥulwa al-murra*)[1] or not. But on the supposition that it is, then we do not know of its possessing these peculiarities. We do not deny that the injection of fats and certain extremely greasy substances into the rectum has attained a certain repute in creating nourishment on account of the quickness of its absorption by a power greater than that of the stomach. But this savage method, namely, its injection at boiling-point, we have never heard of except in Egypt. No wonder she is the Mother of Wonders !

[p. 45.] In this place we call upon those who care to preserve the bloom and nourishment of their bodies not to follow the counsels of the " old wives," but to abandon those old absurdities. Let them be recorded in the history of the Past, because by placing them in history there is built up a new age. And especially (does this apply to) the inhabitants of Cairo, who claim nowadays to be humane and civilized.

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[1] [Or *Dulcamara.* Tr.]

FOLK MEDICINE IN MODERN EGYPT

EPILOGUE

Many students have forced us to complete the printing of 191 the Second Part of the *Ṭibb al-Rukka*, or " Old Wives' Medicine " by publishing what we have gathered in addition in the interval. Since our researches have been generally concerning the experiences of women in Lower Egypt, it is our hope that, in course of time when we have visited the regions of Upper Egypt, we may gather something of their customs and " cures." We leave this, if Allah pleases, as well as the " prescriptions " of the people of Lower Egypt, to Part III. And Allah is responsible if our work becomes useful and beneficial.

(The end of Part II. Part III follows it and begins with " The Congress of Quacks.")[1]

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[1] [This Third Part, so far as I have been able to ascertain, was never published, and if ever finished, its present existence is unknown. Tr.]

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Arabic words are given in *italics*

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